

DEFENDING YOUR LIFE™ © 1989

An Original Screenplay by
Albert Brooks

Summer 1989

Property of:
The Geffen Film Company
Warner Bros., Inc.
4000 Warner Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91522

Registered WGAw No. 410377

Defender

FADE IN:

ON A BLACK SCREEN IS THE FOLLOWING:

ARTICLE TWENTY-EIGHT
SECTION 1. The Constitution of the United
States of America is hereby repealed.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET - DAY

Set amidst the parklike setting is a sprawling building of ivy-covered red brick, the Stromberg School for Girls. This street is obviously elevated some distance above ground level, because rising in distance, beyond the school, are the tops of a dozen skyscrapers.

An old man, MR. ARNOLD, is standing guard at the ornate, wrought-iron gate in front of the school. On the school grounds are several groups of GIRLS playing lawnball or croquet, and a few NURSES pushing baby carriages.

SUPER TITLE: "LOS ANGELES, 2070 A.D.

INT. STROMBERG SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A pretty secretary, MISS ORTIZ, is marching down the hall. Walking next to her is a beautiful, platinum-blonde, 16-year-old girl, JUNE MONROE. June looks worried.

A group of attractive GIRLS, fresh from a game of lawnball, troops down hallway in opposite direction.

GIRL 1
What've you done now, June?

GIRL 2
What hasn't she done?

The other girls laugh and June makes a face at them.

INT. MISS DAVIDSON'S OFFICE - DAY

MISS DAVIDSON, a tall woman of 39 with accusing eyes and a tightly set mouth, is staring at a pair of framed photos on a wall.

First photo is of an avuncular man, "RICHARD LYTLE, C.E.O. OF THE REPUBLIC CORPORATION," according to the caption at bottom of photo; other photo is of "PHILIP DUMONT, C.E.O. OF THE LOS ANGELES CORPORATION." Dumont is a genial-looking man in his 40s.

Door opens and Miss Ortiz escorts June in.

MISS ORTIZ
Miss June Monroe, ma'am.

Miss Davidson turns around slowly.

MISS DAVIDSON
Thank you, Miss Ortiz.

Miss Ortiz exits.

JUNE
Miss Davidson, whatever it is,
I didn't do it. And if I did do
it, I didn't mean to do it.

Miss Davidson smiles coldly, picks up a folder from her desk and
flips through it.

MISS DAVIDSON
Miss Monroe, the Stromberg School
for Girls prides itself on turning
out well-behaved, useful, loving
companions.

June stiffens, knowing what's coming.

MISS DAVIDSON
(continuing)
You, however, are the most
obstinate, self-centered,
free-thinking girl this school
has ever had the misfortune of
turning out.

June rolls her eyes; this is worse than she thought.

MISS DAVIDSON
(continuing)
However, I am pleased to announce
that our failure to mold you into
a proper lady will not be held
against us.

Miss Davidson throws folder on the desk, then picks up a legal
document and hands it to June, who scans it suspiciously.

MISS DAVIDSON
(continuing)
Your freedom papers, Miss Monroe.

June is confused.

JUNE
Free? Me?

Miss Davidson hits a button on her desk and Miss Ortiz immediately enters.

MISS DAVIDSON

Show Miss Monroe to the gate, Miss Ortiz. We don't allow free agents in this school.

Miss Ortiz frowns, as confused as June, but she takes the girl's elbow and starts to lead her out of the office.

MISS DAVIDSON

(continuing)

Oh, Miss Monroe. Just to clear up our records, the computer logged a phone call to your room last night. What was it about?

JUNE

Huh? Phone call? It was a wrong number.

Miss Davidson betrays a touch of annoyance as she turns away, dismissing her.

EXT. SCHOOL GATE - DAY

Mr. Arnold watches Miss Ortiz escort June to front gate. June keeps looking over her shoulder at the school.

JUNE

But why can't I say goodbye to everybody and get my things?

Mr. Arnold opens gate and June steps through.

MISS ORTIZ

Orders are orders. You're a very lucky girl, June. You're free. Good luck.

She pats June on the shoulder and starts back for the school. Mr. Arnold closes the gate.

MR. ARNOLD

You're free, June?

June nods, shows him the legal document, freezes in place for a moment, then lets out a whoop as the enormity of her situation sinks in.

JUNE

I'm free Mr. Arnold! Free!

She takes hold of Mr. Arnold arms and does an impromptu dance with the amused guard. The dance comes to a sudden end when a sleek, electric-powered green car pulls up to the gate. On car door is the city emblem: a group of skyscrapers within a circle; outside the circle are the words "LOS ANGELES CORPORATION, MARSHAL." Above the emblem are the words "CAVEAT EMPTOR."

MARSHAL ALEX EVANS, a big man in a green uniform and dark sunglasses, gets out of car.

MARSHAL EVANS
Miss June Monroe?

June nods uncertainly. Marshal Evans unfolds a document and reads it. June listens with growing horror.

MARSHAL EVANS
(continuing)
June Monroe, free citizen of the Los Angeles Corporation, a subsidiary of The Republic Corporation, this is official notification that you are the object of an unlimited murder contract. Said contract commences today at 1200 hours, and is valid for a period not to exceed 36 hours. It is unlawful for you to seek to avoid the execution of this contract by any means, device or subterfuge. Failure to comply with all stipulations of this contract as codified by the Crime Control Act of 2021 will be considered sufficient grounds for a termination judgment.

Marshal Evans hands the contract to June who takes it with trembling hands. Mr. Arnold shakes his head sadly and moves away.

MR. ARNOLD
It's not right. Not right.

MARSHAL EVANS
I'm sorry, ma'am. I hate this part of my job.

JUNE
Why? What did I do?

Marshal Evans takes his sunglasses off and shakes his head. June wipes away a tear.

JUNE
(continuing)
Just a minute ago.... What am I
going to do?

Marshal Evans studies her for a second, then opens passenger door of the car.

MARSHAL EVANS
Get in.

EXT. ELEVATOR BANK - DAY

Marshal Evan's car stops in front of a bank of elevators. Sign above elevators reads: "EXIT ELEVATORS ONLY." Marshal Evans and June get out of the car.

June moves as if in a fog. Marshal Evans takes a blanket out of the car trunk and gives it to her.

MARSHAL EVANS
Put this on when you get there.
Ask for Trooper Laredo. He's your
only hope.

She nods, crosses to one of the elevators.

JUNE
Yes. OK. Thank you.

The clear-glass door closes and elevator starts rising. Marshall Evans follows it with his eyes for a while, then he looks around him nervously.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

June looks out the glass door as Los Angeles reveals itself to be a vast, subterranean metropolis built on seven levels. Each level is ten stories tall. The central hub of the city extends uninterrupted from ground floor to ceiling and is given over to skyscrapers.

Surrounding this central hub are the seven levels which house apartment buildings and individual residences; the higher the level one lives on, the more expensive the property. The outermost ring of city is given over to industrial and manufacturing concerns, and hydroponics farms.

Transportation for the one million citizens is by monorail, conventional cars, and elevators. The upper three levels are additionally served by moving walkways.

As the final level disappears beneath June, she shuts her eyes and rests her forehead on the door. The elevator continues upward several hundred more feet in a dark tunnel dimly lit by an occasional red light.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY - DAY

The elevator comes to a stop and June steps out into a small, windowless room. Elevator door slams shut behind her. Another door slides open in front of her, revealing a smaller chamber beyond it and yet another door. June takes a deep breath and steps into the chamber and the second door clangs shut.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - ABOVEGROUND - DAY

The door in the bunker-like elevator house opens and June steps out into a devastated city. She coughs and her eyes water as the sulfurous yellow-graze haze shrouding the ruins gets to her. She stumbles about the debris-littered street, gazing in disbelief at the burned-out buildings, many of which have toppled over.

Scattered throughout the city are numerous smokestacks rising from concrete blockhouses, belching bilious smoke into the already foul atmosphere. Nothing moves on the surface except an occasional scabrous-looking dog or coyote. All the roads and freeways are clogged with rusted vehicles--the city's final gridlock frozen in place for eternity.

But there is human life. June spots an OLD WOMAN in a colorful cape and hood dash into one of the ruins.

JUNE

Excuse me!

The effort of talking makes June cough because of the fetid air she has to inhale. Old Woman comes out of building, curious at sight of the beautiful girl in stylish dress and shoes. She looks June up and down with bright eyes. A few other PEOPLE stick their heads out of the ruins to observe.

JUNE

(continuing)

Could you please tell me where
I might find a Mr. Trooper Laredo?

Old Woman smiles, the puzzle of June's presence suddenly explained.

SNAKE MAN (V.O.)

Hunter! Hunter!

The other people watching June and Old Woman disappear into the buildings. At the nearest street intersection, a man wearing a green and white-checked cape comes running out of a side street. He has a tattoo of a snake on his throat and cheek.

SNAKE MAN

Hunter! Run!

June whirls around, startled, but Old Woman calmly takes the blanket out of June's hands and examines it.

At the intersection, the HUNTER trots into view, grinning. The 18-year-old boy is dressed in brown overalls, shiny brown boots, and a brown helmet with a clear-glass face mask. Four skulls are painted on front of the helmet. An automatic pistol and a long knife are holstered at his waist. Clipped to the belt are four human ears.

When the Hunter trots out of view again, June turns a questioning look on Old Woman, but she pretends not to see it and instead wraps the blanket around June.

OLD WOMAN

Follow the Hunter. Maybe you'll get lucky.

Old Woman abruptly turns and walks into the building. June sighs, exasperated, but clutches the blanket around her and runs as best she can in her shoes.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

June makes better time on this street because it is relatively free of litter. Farther down the street, the Hunter is continuing his chase of Snake Man.

Many of the ground-floor walls of the abandoned buildings have been caved in to provide shelter, or to house makeshift food stands, boutiques, jewelry stores, hair salons, or tattoo emporiums.

The PEOPLE, who disappear at the approach of the Hunter, wear garishly colored outfits underneath long, hooded capes. The capes themselves bear a variety of designs: reproductions of famous paintings, long-dead movie stars, presidents, animals, logos of ancient sporting teams, or geometric patterns.

Hanging around their throats are brightly trimmed goggles and breathing masks. Most of them, male and female, wear earrings and makeup--the traditional beauty type, or the war-paint type motif. Many also have face tattoos, the designs of which are as varied as those found on capes.

The people seem gaunt, unhealthy. Even the few young ones look old before their time. Only the occasional child shows any energy.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

The gloom is broken by shafts of pale daylight leaking through the shattered windows. Many book shelves lie on floor or lean crazily against each other. Books are scattered everywhere.

Moving slowly through the labyrinth is a tall shadow that occasionally bends down to examine a book, only to move on in disgust when it crumbles in his hands.

In the dim light it is impossible to make out the features of MIKE "TROOPER LAREDO.

From outside, HEAR Snake Man's voice: "Hunter! Hunter!"

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Snake Man stumbles over a pothole and falls. He looks over his shoulder and his eyes go wider. He looks around, pleadingly. A few frightened faces peer out from shadows as Hunter stops a few feet from fallen man.

SNAKE MAN

Please don't kill me...

The Hunter laughs, throws a business card at Snake Man.

Card reads: "Billy Horowitz, Brotherhood of Expeditors, 946-216-338"; the Brotherhood's logo, a bullseye target pierced by a lightning bolt, is placed on lower right-hand corner of card.

The Hunter pulls out a big knife.

HUNTER

I have to kill you, smogger. I've already printed up my cards.

Suddenly he slaps at his face as something hits it. He turns his hand over and is stunned when he sees the business card trapped in it:

Card reads: "Michael Torres Laredo, Defenders Guild, 492-618-136"; the Defenders logo, a mailed fist clutching a pair of lightning bolts, is embossed on lower right-hand corner of card.

The Hunter whirls around and finds Laredo ten yards behind him.

Mike "Trooper" Lareda is 30 years old, wiry, hard-faced. No jewelry, makeup or tattoos. Instead of a cape, he's wearing a black rain slicker and a black, bullet-proof cowboy hat over his dark hair. The faceplate-breather mask retracts into the hat.

HUNTER

Trooper Laredo...?

Laredo doesn't respond, but his unflinching gaze makes the Hunter stumble over his words.

HUNTER

(continuing)

I'm in lawful pursuit of a decertified citizen.

People start coming out of the shadows.

LAREDO

I don't tolerate hunting in my territory.

HUNTER

The Crime Control Act of 2021 clearly states that-

LAREDO

File it.

Laredo flicks back his slicker, exposing a big shockgun riding his hip.

The knife slips out of the Hunter's grip and clatters to the street, and he starts back-stepping.

HUNTER

I don't want no trouble, Mr. Laredo. I just need one more kill to qualify for the Brotherhood...

LAREDO

Best go for your iron, then.

The Hunter looks around desperately, but all he sees are wicked smiles. Sweat rolls down Hunter's face as his hand darts for his pistol--but Laredo's draw is dazzlingly fast and the exploding bullet from his shockgun turns the Hunter's arm to bloody jelly and sends the pistol flying.

A ragged cheer erupts from onlookers who rush forward for a closer look at the Hunter, writhing on the ground, crying in agony.

SNAKE MAN

Thanks, Mr. Laredo.

LAREDO

My pleasure. Throw this worm back
in the hole he crawled out of.

The Hunter is lifted up in the air and carried away by the mob. June, still wrapped in the blanket, remains behind. She follows Laredo when he walks away.

Laredo glances up at the sky and notices a green-black band of color roiling in the thick atmosphere. He turns a corner and quickens his pace. Behind him, June tries to hurry up, but maneuvering around the junk in the street is difficult.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - DAY

Laredo rounds another corner and steps into a doorway. When June comes around, running, he steps out of doorway and she bumps into him. She staggers back and falls to ground, shrieking, her head now totally enmeshed in blanket.

Laredo chuckles, shakes his head, turns and walks away. June finally throws the blanket off, gets up and hurries after him.

JUNE

Wait, please!

Laredo keeps walking.

JUNE

(continuing)

I need to talk with you!

When Laredo doesn't stop, she angrily picks up a large rock and throws it at him with surprising strength.

Laredo spins around, shockgun in hand and blows up the rock in mid-flight and the rock dust blows into the startled girl's face. Tears leave streaks in the dust on her face.

JUNE

(continuing)

Are you going to kill me?

Laredo is taken aback by her beauty.

LAREDO

You want me to?

June vigorously shakes her head. Laredo puts gun away.

LAREDO

(continuing)

What are you doing up here?

June brushes away her tears, smearing the dust on her face.

JUNE

The marshal said to find Trooper
Laredo. He gave me this.

June pulls out the murder contract and Laredo takes it. He glances at paper perfunctorily.

LAREDO

An unlimited murder contract. Good
for 36 hours as of noon today.

June nods, bites her lower lip to keep from crying. Laredo looks up at the sky and sees the green-black band looming larger.

A stiff wind kicks up and debris starts blowing. The blanket June was wearing scuds toward them and she grabs it. Her nose twitches at the smells the wind brings.

JUNE

It's terrible up here.

Laredo hands paper back and walks off.

LAREDO

Doesn't look like you'll have time
to get used to it.

JUNE

Aren't you going to help me? The
man said you were a defender. He
said you were the best.

Laredo stops under a building overhang.

LAREDO

What are you? Crime union
apprentice? Joygirl? Drug rep?
Civil servant?

JUNE

I was a student until this morning.

LAREDO

Who paid the bills? Your parents?

JUNE

I don't have any.

LAREDO

Relatives?

JUNE

Don't have any.

LAREDO
Guardian?

June shakes her head.

LAREDO
(continuing)
Benefactor?

JUNE
He gave me my freedom this morning.

Laredo raises an eyebrow at this.

LAREDO
Who's trying to kill you?

JUNE
I don't know! I don't know! All
I know is it stinks up here, I'm
scared, and I hate you!

She turns around, to storm off, but instead twists her ankle. Choking back a cry, she limps to a rusted car and sits on its pitted fender. June coughs and her eyes start watering.

Laredo looks down the street and sees the black rain pouring from the green-black cloud.

LAREDO
I'd get out of the street if I
were you.

JUNE
Why should I? You don't care what
happens to me.

He crosses to June and scoops her up in his arms. She squirms and hits him as he carries her to the shelter of the building.

JUNE
(continuing)
Put me down! Let go!

Laredo sets her down on her feet as the rain starts sizzling. Between coughs, she glares at Laredo, who steps inside building, looking for something.

When he comes back, he's holding a tin can. He tosses can into street and the rain causes the metal to start bubbling.

June looks chastised as Laredo puts his hat on her and flips down the faceplate-breather mask. He hands her the blanket and she wraps it around her.

LAREDO
Can you walk?

June tests her ankle.

JUNE
It's OK.

LAREDO
Good.

He adjusts a black bandana over his mouth and nose, flips the slicker's hood over his head, and leads the way into the dark ruins.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Black rain is still falling. Laredo and June run toward a five-story brick building. The windows on top floor have glass, but all the others are boarded up.

They reach the doorway and June throws away her blackened blanket. Laredo brings out a key and unlocks the heavy padlock on the door.

JUNE
I saw some videos on what the great earthquake of ninety-nine did, but I didn't know it was this bad.

LAREDO
The quake was pretty bad, but when The Republic Corporation repealed all the pollution control laws, that was it for old L.A.

INT. LAREDO'S BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Laredo uses the same padlock to secure the door from inside.

JUNE
How much do you charge?

LAREDO
How much do you have?

JUNE
Nothing.

LAREDO
Guess I'll have to take it out in trade.

Laredo walks across dim lobby toward stairs.

JUNE
What does that mean?

LAREDO
It's a joke. A bad one.

He starts up the stairs and June follows.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR LANDING - DAY

June is winded as she and Laredo climb final steps.

JUNE
You're the only one in this
building?

LAREDO
Yes. I don't much like company.

They cross to nearest door and Laredo unlocks it.

JUNE
That surprises me.

INT. LAREDO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Laredo throws door open and flicks on lights, revealing a big room: book-filled shelves cover three of the walls; up against the fourth wall is a computer and a video machine on a desk. An air conditioner protrudes from one of the windows and is HUMMING quietly. There are only a few pieces of furniture. June stares in amazement.

JUNE
This is incredible--for up here.

LAREDO
I even have running water.

June hands Laredo his rain slicker and stands in front of the air conditioner, gratefully.

JUNE
Ecstasy.

Laredo takes book out of the slicker and inspects it closely. The title is "WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS" BY MORTIMER J. ADLER. He carefully starts paging through the book.

LAREDO
It keeps the books from falling
apart.

JUNE

You can read?

Laredo nods, sets book down on desk and picks up a framed photo of himself as a youngster standing between his parents: a tall man with a mustache, and a pretty, dark-haired woman.

LAREDO

My parents taught me.

JUNE

None of us in school had parents.
What happened to yours?

LAREDO

Never mind. Give me your I.D.

June unclips a computer chip from a gold neck chain and hands it to Laredo, who plugs it into a slot in the computer.

Immediately, the following appears on computer monitor: "JUNE MONROE, #A9902-652-8755. BORN: 13 AUGUST 2054. GENETIC PARENTS: CLASSIFIED. RESIDENCE: LOS ANGELES. CITIZENSHIP STATUS: UNRESTRICTED, 21 AUGUST 2070. HEALTH STATUS: CLASS A. FINANCIAL STATUS: NO DEBTS OR LIENS. MISC: UNLIMITED MURDER CONTRACT FILED 20 AUGUST 2070 TO TAKE EFFECT 21 AUGUST 2070, 1200 HOURS AND EXPIRE 22 AUGUST 2070, 2400 HOURS."

LAREDO

You turned 16 last week--bad timing: murder contracts can't be filed on anyone under 16. And you're free of all drug dependencies and communicable diseases. Aside from the fact that someone's trying to kill you, you're better off than ninety percent of the people in L.A.

June moves up next to Laredo.

JUNE

Lucky me. Can it tell you who's trying to kill me?

LAREDO

Only the city computer knows that, and I don't have the password.

Laredo calls up a menu on the screen and starts typing. June drifts over to a wall and stares at the books: a collection of science and history titles in this section.

JUNE

I can read, too. I'm the only one
at school who does--did.

Laredo looks up, surprised.

LAREDO

Good for you. Books are important.

JUNE

Mrs. Pinsky said that books hold
all the world's secrets.

LAREDO

Then a lot of secrets have been
lost. OK, I've signed on as your
defender.

He pulls out June's I.D. chip and tosses it at her, then puts on
his slicker.

LAREDO

(continuing)

From now on I'm your shadow and
your brain. You don't do anything,
go anywhere, think anything,
without my knowing about it first.

He opens a desk drawer, pulls out several ammo clips for the
shockgun and pockets them. Next he pulls out a small
computer/telephone. Top half of the device holds a speaker and
receiver; bottom half holds pushbuttons and a location-indicator
window.

LAREDO

(continuing)

This is a combination computer
and telephone. Keep it with you
at all times. It has a location
indicator.

He touches a button on side of phone and these words appear on
indicator: "SURFACE, SECTOR 79."

LAREDO

(continuing)

All you have to do is push this
button. But don't push this button.

He touches that button and a microchip pops out of bottom.

LAREDO

(continuing)

This chip transmits your position
to my phone. Got it?

He replaces the chip in the phone and hands it to her.

JUNE

Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Laredo.
I'll find some way to pay you.

Laredo picks up two paperbacks from the desk and studies them: one is a mystery with a lurid cover featuring a lingerie-clad woman fighting off a knife-wielding thug: "REQUIEM FOR A BLONDE" BY MIKE FLINT; second book is a western with a much-creased cover of a lone cowboy facing four outlaws: "THE LAST SHOOTOUT" BY GURVIS VERNOR.

He pockets the mystery, hesitates, then also pockets the Adler book.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Sun is shining weakly through the brown sky. The inhabitants are once more going about their business. June is wearing a black slicker identical to Laredo's.

JUNE

Why do you people live up here?

LAREDO

I live up here because I like it.
They live here because they're
Class D's--noncitizens. Many of
them are sick, or are drug addicts,
and can't hold a job. Some are
crims on the run.

JUNE

Crims?

LAREDO

Criminals. People who committed
an illegal crime.

June gestures at a group of men in faded military fatigues, all of whom are missing limbs or are otherwise disfigured. They're passing a bottle of wine around and laughing.

JUNE

What about them?

Laredo sees the group.

LAREDO

Veterans of the Merger Wars.

The VETERANS see Laredo and they wave at him.

VETERANS

(variously)

Hey Trooper! It's the colonel.

Hi Trooper!

Laredo waves back at them but doesn't stop.

JUNE

Shouldn't they have got a pension
or something?

LAREDO

They got the "or something": one
hundred shares of non-voting stock
in the Defense Corp. Of course,
Defense hasn't voted a dividend
since the Merger Wars started 20
years ago.June looks at a group of people gathered around the prostrate form
of a YOUNG GIRL on a sidewalk.

JUNE

Something's wrong over there.

Laredo glances disinterestedly at the group.

LAREDO

Probably a junkie. Probably dead.

June stops, not knowing whether to go to the aid of the girl or
follow Laredo. She runs to catch up with Laredo.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The large dirt area--mostly mud now--is deserted except for an
old, white-haired SPEAKER on a concrete stand talking to a few
LISTENERS; a group of ragged-looking KIDS is playing football at
one end of park; and a few SPECTATORS are watching two men in
Roman gladiator outfits engaged in a mock sword duel at the far
end of the park in front of a large, concrete blockhouse. Rising
from one end of the blockhouse's roof is a tall smokestack
frothing gray smoke.Laredo makes his way to the blockhouse, only half listening to
Speaker. June daintily follows him, trying to keep her shoes from
getting muddy.

SPEAKER

The Republic Corp hasn't outlawed
religion, but does anyone believe
in God anymore?

(more)

SPEAKER (Cont'd)

The Republic Corp hasn't outlawed
compassion, but does anyone care
about his fellow man?

Speaker follows Laredo and June with his eyes.

JUNE

Can he say those things?

LAREDO

Why do you think he was exiled
up here?

Speaker hurries his speech.

SPEAKER

No one is going to come and free
us. We must cast off the chains
of enslavement ourselves! Thank
you and God bless you.

Listeners applaud half-heartedly. Speaker jumps off the podium and
runs after Laredo and June, finally catching up with them near
the entrance to the blockhouse.

SPEAKER

(continuing)

Trooper, glad I caught you.

Laredo shakes hands with him.

LAREDO

Another lecture, Speaker?

SPEAKER

No. It hasn't done any good in
the past. Would you carry a message
to my son?

LAREDO

I'll see what I can do.

Speaker thrusts a folded-up slip of paper into Laredo's hand.

SPEAKER

Thank you. Who's your friend?

LAREDO

My client, June Monroe.

SPEAKER

Client. You wonder that I speak
against a society that sanctions
the murder of children?

June turns away and watches GLADIATORS. Both men are in their late-twenties, once powerfully built, but now emaciated, their bodies and faces criss-crossed by scars.

LAREDO

I only wonder that you waste your breath. You can't give the people what they don't want.

SPEAKER

They just don't know any better. They're like a dog that's been kicked too often.

LAREDO

Then there's not much hope for the dog, is there?

SPEAKER

Not when men like you, our best and strongest, continue to serve the master faithfully.

LAREDO

Take care, Speaker.

Laredo and June start for the blockhouse again.

JUNE

Why are helping me?

He nods at a line of graffiti scrawled above the entrance, "ABANDON HOPE."

LAREDO

No one should go into hell alone.

INT. BLOCKHOUSE - DAY

Behind two policemen, in the cavernous, L-shaped room are a pair of wide escalators disappearing down into darkness; on either side of the escalators is a bank of freight elevators. The short end of "L" isn't visible from entrance.

SGT. PENA runs a hand over his bald pate but quickly replaces his cap as Laredo and June enter from outside. OFFICER WILSON steps forward insolently.

OFFICER WILSON

I.D.'s., people.

Laredo holds out his wrist and Wilson runs a wand over the i.d. chip embedded in watch face. When the wand turns green, Wilson turns to June and repeats the procedure on the chip at the end of her gold neck chain. The wand turns green.

OFFICER WILSON
Any contraband to declare?

LAREDO
Want to search me?

Wilson fumes but turns to June.

OFFICER WILSON
Any contraband to declare?

JUNE
Want to search me?

Laredo smiles and brushes past angry cop. June sticks her tongue out at him and follows Laredo.

SGT. PENA
'Luck, Trooper.

Laredo nods, starts for escalators, but veers off to follow June, who's been drawn by a ROARING sound coming from around the corner of the "L".

LAREDO
Don't do that...

She ignores him, rounds corner and comes to a sudden stop, her mouth dropping open in horror, too shocked to make any sound.

THE INCINERATOR ROOM

TWO SANITATION WORKERS in white decontamination suits are lifting bodies off a cart and throwing them into a blazing incinerator. In the open elevator behind them is another cart piled high with clothed bodies--mostly adults, some of whom obviously died violently.

June finally manages a scream and the Workers look at her. Laredo claps a hand on her shoulder.

LAREDO
Yesterday's garbage.

INT. ESCALATOR - DAY

Dim red lights are widely spaced over steeply dropping escalator tunnel. June is still shaken by what she's seen.

JUNE

Who were they?

LAREDO

People who died overnight: Class B's who overdosed, or Class C's who died of their disease. Some were murdered. Legally, of course.

June looks longingly at up-escalator next to theirs.

JUNE

Why can't I hide out on the surface until the contract expires?

LAREDO

It's against the law to avoid your duty as a citizen by refusing to submit to a legally contracted crime against your person. The punishment is loss of citizenship and permanent exile to the surface. Except when you run away from a murder contract. In that case, the police send the death squad after you.

JUNE

That's crazy. I'm just supposed to sit around and let someone kill me?

LAREDO

Or beat you up. Or rob you. Or rape you. As long as the crime has been properly filed with the Justice Corporation and the appropriate tax paid to The Republic Corporation, anyone can do anything to you as long as they can afford to hire a professional to carry out the crime. In your case, the person who wants you dead went to the Brotherhood of Expeditors.

JUNE

Why are they called expeditors?

LAREDO

Because they expedite your passage from this life to the hereafter.

June shivers.

EXT. UNDERGROUND LOS ANGELES (LEVEL SEVEN) - DAY

June clutches Laredo's sleeve as they emerge from escalator tunnel and cross to a railing overlooking the city.

LAREDO

Every crime specialty has its own union. Arsonists belong to the Arsonists Association. Burglars to the Breaking and Entering Union. Kidnappers to-

JUNE

(interrupting)

I get the idea. If I'd known the real world was this bad, I wouldn't have been in such a hurry to get out of school.

She glances warily at the PEOPLE waiting at a monorail stop a little distance behind them.

LAREDO

Relax. The contract doesn't take effect for another five minutes.

JUNE

How do you know the expediter's watch isn't fast?

LAREDO

Good question.

She glares at him. He pulls out his shockgun, checks the load.

LAREDO

(continuing)

People usually have a good idea who's trying to kill them, or at least the why behind it.

JUNE

I don't. I told you I've been at the Stromberg School all my life.

LAREDO

OK, anything strange happen to you there, lately?

June thinks for a moment, is about to shake her head but stops.

JUNE

I got a phone call last night. All he said was "tomorrow." Anyway,
(more)

JUNE (Cont'd)

I think that's what he said--he was sick, or drunk, or something. I thought it was a wrong number. Then this morning, Miss Davidson asked me about it.

LAREDO

Miss Davidson?

JUNE

She's the headmistress. She wanted to know what the call was about because the computer didn't record the call. The school computer records everything.

The ground trembles as a monorail train pulls to a stop. Laredo and June run for it.

INT. MONORAIL - DAY

PASSENGERS are a mixture of blue-collar workers and older people. Tattoos, outrageous makeup, outlandish clothes and pounds of jewelry are the order of the day just as it is topside, the only difference being that the quality of the merchandise improves with each successive level ascended.

The undergrounders of course have no need for the protective gear topsiders wear. In fact, Laredo and June's slickers draw everyone's attention, but they quickly glance away when they meet Laredo's hard glance in return.

Laredo and June hang onto straps as train lurches into motion. Laredo keeps an eye on the Passengers.

LAREDO

It's possible the school computer didn't record that phone call because it was scrambled on the other end.

JUNE

Then maybe it's tied in with my contract!

At one end of the train, a TV screen comes to life: "LIVE ACTION NEWS." The NEWSCASTER smiles widely as he talks.

NEWSCASTER

Good afternoon. I'm Dexter Jacobs with the Live Action News. The war on drugs continues.

(more)

NEWSCASTER (Cont'd)

The Justice Corporation is scheduled to execute ten Class B's any moment now for the illegal sale of drugs. We'll go live now to Alexandria Forbes, who's covering the event.

Newscaster's face is replaced by a SHOT of a gorgeous woman, ALEXANDRIA FORBES. In b.g are a dozen gallows, ten of which are occupied by black-hooded MEN-- he nooses around their necks help keep the hoods in place.

ALEXANDRIA

Thank you, Dexter. As you can see behind me, the execution of these criminal drug sellers is imminent.

Laredo snorts and glares at the Passengers avidly eying the TV. June is also staring fascinatedly at the TV, so Laredo puts a hand on her head and turns it away from the screen. He looks out the window as the monorail plunges down to the lower levels of the city.

ALEXANDRIA (O.S.)

And it looks like they're ready to drop the floor on the crims. Yes here we go...

O.S. HEAR the sound of ten gallows thudding into action. June gives a start.

EXT. MONORAIL STOP (LEVEL FOUR) - DAY

Train stops on a street fronted by small shops. Laredo and June are among passengers that disembark. They cross to a communications booth in a small park between buildings. June continues a conversation from the monorail.

JUNE

But I thought anyone could buy and sell drugs.

LAREDO

Anyone can buy, yes, but only the government can sell them. Just like the Justice Corp controls crime, the Entertainment Corporation controls drugs. And prostitution, television, movies, sports...

JUNE

Justice Corporation, Entertainment Corporation--they're the government?

LAREDO

They're two of the big seven corps that make up The Republic Corporation.

They step onto the artificial grass of the park and cross to the public computer/telephone booth.

LAREDO

(continuing)

You don't seem to know a whole hell of a lot about the Republic. What exactly did they teach you at this fancy school?

JUNE

We learned stupid stuff, mostly. Dancing, singing, cooking, house-cleaning, etiquette, makeup, party-giving--all the things men like, I suppose.

LAREDO

That's what they like?

JUNE

Don't you know?

LAREDO

Never thought much about it.

On video screen of the computer terminal is a newsclip of Philip Dumont taking a tour of a hospital filled with sick children; blurb at bottom of screen identifies him as: "PHILIP DUMONT, C.E.O., THE LOS ANGELES CORPORATION." SOUND is OFF. Laredo puts his charge card into slot in machine and SOUND comes ON.

TERMINAL VOICE

Philip Dumont, C.E.O. of The Los Angeles Corporation, today dedicated a new hospital for Class C citizens-

Laredo hits a key and screen goes blank.

LAREDO

Who was the guy who sponsored you at school--your benefactor?

JUNE

Wally. Walter Wren. He's a class guy. He owns a gladiator company.

LAREDO

When did you see him last?

JUNE

Last Sunday. Benefactors are only allowed to visit on Sundays. We talked about gladiators like we usually did. Oh yeah, and we talked about mountains with snow on them. The Patagonia mountains he called them. They're in South America.

LAREDO

I know.

He starts typing on the terminal's keyboard. The face of Walter Wren flashes on the screen.

JUNE

That's him!

The man on screen is 50 years old, roguishly handsome.

TERMINAL VOICE

Walter Forrest Wren, Class A citizen, 50 years old, was the victim of an unlawful murder on August 20, 2070 at approximately 23 hours, 49 minutes. Mr. Wren was the principal owner of All-Star Gladiators, sat on the board of directors of The Los Angeles Corporation, and was a high official in the Los Angeles branch of the Church of Pure Blood. Mr. Wren is survived by a brother. Los Angeles police are investigating.

Laredo brings out his computer/phone and attaches it via a cable to a socket in the terminal. He hits a key and the information is transferred to his machine. The screen blanks out and Laredo disconnects his computer/phone. He turns to June and notices that she's gone pale.

LAREDO

What's wrong?

JUNE

What's wrong? A man I like is killed, someone else is trying to kill me, and you ask what's wrong?

LAREDO

Sorry. I forget people take these things personally.

JUNE

Personally? Yes, I take my death very personally!

June stifles a sob and Laredo is at a loss as to how to comfort her.

LAREDO

At least he gave you your freedom before he died.

June nods, and after a few moments her face breaks into a frown.

JUNE

Hey, wait a minute, how come his death was unlawful, and it's okay to kill me?

LAREDO

Corporate board members are exempt from all criminal acts.

JUNE

What? Those dirty, rotten, sons-of-bitches!

Laredo laughs.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Laredo and June leave the park behind them and angle down the street to a bank of elevators, in front of which a crowd has gathered.

Parked at the curb is a black and white police car. On car door is the city emblem: skyscrapers in a circle; outside the circle are the words "LOS ANGELES CORPORATION, POLICE." Above the emblem are the words "CAVEAT EMPTOR."

JUNE

What exactly is it that we're doing? I know I'm not allowed to hide out, but do we have to be so high profile?

LAREDO

If we can find out who took out the contract on you, we can threaten to put a contract on him if he doesn't cancel his contract on you first.

JUNE

Hey, I like that! How often does it work?

LAREDO

Not very.

June's elation instantly disappears, to be replaced by curiosity at what's transpiring in front of the elevator bank. They push through the crowd and June flinches at what she sees.

A VICTIM is lying on the sidewalk, bleeding from various wounds. A PARAMEDIC is attending him. SGT. HAUSER, a middle-aged cop with a death's head skull tattooed on his right cheek and a detective's badge pinned to his gray suit, is standing between a young THUG and a LAWYER, working a hand computer. Thug is massaging his battered hands.

HAUSER

What's the contract say, counselor?

LAWYER

It's a run of the mill assault and battery, Sgt. Hauser. Specs call for massive injuries.

HAUSER

What's the damage, Doc?

Paramedic removes a blood-stained probe from Victim's mouth.

PARAMEDIC

Extensive but not massive.

HAUSER

Trying to cheat your client, son?

THUG

I guess I still have trouble assessing damages.

LAWYER

The Assault and Battery Union will have to suspend you.

THUG

Please, I have a family...

HAUSER

This is your lucky day, kid.

He draws a foot back and kicks Victim hard in the ribs. Victim groans, blood spurts from his mouth, and he loses consciousness. Paramedic reinserts the probe and checks the reading.

PARAMEDIC

That did it.

THUG

I won't forget it, Sgt. Hauser.
Thank you.

Hauser nods and Thug trots off. Hauser and Lawyer laugh. Hauser sees Laredo and a hint of fear flashes across his face.

LAREDO

I thought you were on the death
squad, Hauser.

Hauser regains his cocky composure. Lawyer glances at Laredo and drifts away. The other onlookers do the same. Paramedic starts ministering to Victim.

HAUSER

Still am. There's another riot
at the plague colony in
Bakersfield. A lot of the
uniformed boys had to reinforce
the federales, so I'm pulling an
extra shift.

LAREDO

Do you have more fun killing
people, or hurting them?

Hauser's nostrils flare, but he keeps himself in check.

HAUSER

I hear you're on a case. Is that
her?

He grins at June, who sneers back at him.

LAREDO

None of your business.

Hauser's hand is itching to go for the weapon in his shoulder holster, but Laredo's cold smile deters him.

HAUSER

A record of 42 and oh is a heavy
load to carry. A lot of the boys
are betting against you this time.

LAREDO

Tell them to bet their condos.
The idea off a homeless cop makes
me feel warm all over.

Hauser snorts, gets into his car and drives off.

Laredo leads June to one of the elevators.

LAREDO

The Church of Pure Blood is on
Level Five. The elevator will get
us close enough.

JUNE

Go around Level Five in these black
things?

She grabs at the slicker she's wearing in disgust.

LAREDO

It's bullet proof.

JUNE

Oh, my, how stylisht they are!

EXT. MOVING WALKWAY (LEVEL FIVE) - DAY

The moving walkway Laredo and June are on cuts through a section of high-rent apartment buildings. Neither of them pays any attention to a MOTHER on the adjacent walkway, which is moving in opposite direction, toward them.

The fashionably dressed, plain-looking Mother is pushing a baby carriage. A large diamond ring on her right hand glitters in the "daylight."

LAREDO

Did Walter Wren put anyone else
through the Stromberg School?

JUNE

Sure. Debra Taylor. She graduated
last year. She used to be my best
friend. Hey, can we visit Debra?
Wally said she had a new best
friend --one of his
ex-gladiators--but that's no reason
we can't still be friends, is it?

LAREDO

I think it's OK.

JUNE

Right. What am I asking you for?

As the Mother is about to draw even with them, Laredo pushes June to the ground with one hand and draws his shockgun with the other.

Mother pulls a hand cannon from the carriage but the shot goes wide as Laredo's blast hits "her" in chest and sends the wig flying.

June shrieks and buries her head in her hands.

JUNE

Is it over now? Now that you've killed her--him?

LAREDO

No. An unlimited contract means the contractor can hire as many expeditors as he can afford over the life of the contract.

June shivers. Laredo steps to Mother's body, now revealed to be a man. Laredo takes out a business card and tosses it on the body.

JUNE

Why are you doing that?

LAREDO

It tells the cops how to fill out their paper work.

JUNE

How did you know?

LAREDO

People on Level Five don't push their own babies. And the hired help can't afford big diamond rings.

He lifts Mother's lifeless right hand to show her the ring.

LAREDO

(continuing)

Besides, this moron was wearing the wedding ring on the wrong hand.

He drops the hand, picks up the hand cannon and crosses to a trash box on curb and shoves weapon through the opening.

JUNE

Won't the police want that?

LAREDO

They have enough, already.

He helps June to her feet and they get back on the walkway. June looks over her shoulder at the body.

JUNE

Why didn't they just send a woman expediter in the first place?

LAREDO

There aren't any. As far as the Republic is concerned, women are only fit for two things: whoring and mothering.

EXT. CHURCH OF PURE BLOOD (LEVEL FIVE) - DAY

Laredo and June get off moving sidewalk and cross the street to the Gothic cathedral.

JUNE

Does God live there?

LAREDO

L.A.'s the last place you'll find Him.

INT. CHURCH OF PURE BLOOD - DAY

Pulpit is surrounded by lights, holo-TV equipment and a TV CREW. REVEREND TOM BARON, a dynamic, white-haired man of 65, wearing white vestments, is on the pulpit. Laredo and June stand at periphery of activity, watching.

REVEREND

-half the population are carriers of deadly diseases. At last count, friends, there were one-hundred-thirty-three venereal diseases and seven plagues afflicting the city's one-million citizens. That's five-hundred thousand Class C citizens. There is only one way to secure our children's future, our civilization's future. So far this year your church has contracted for the extermination of twenty-five hundred disease vectors. But we need to do much more.

(more)

REVEREND (Cont'd)

Please keep sending your generous contributions so the Church of Pure Blood can keep doing God's work. Thank you and God bless you.

Reverend smiles beatifically until FLOOR MANAGER signals broadcast is over, then the smile disappears. Reverend steps off pulpit and joins Laredo and June.

REVEREND

(continuing)

I apologize for the interruption, but satellite feeds wait for no man.

He leads the way to his office.

LAREDO

You must be very popular with the Brotherhood of Expeditors, Reverend Baron.

REVEREND

They do give us a bulk discount. You're a Class A, why haven't you joined the Church? We have to look out for our own.

LAREDO

I've defended several Class C's your church targeted for murder.

REVEREND

I know. A pity and a mistake, but everyone has a right to make a profit according to their own beliefs. That's what makes the Republic so wonderful, isn't it?

Laredo doesn't answer.

INT. REVEREND'S OFFICE - DAY

Office is plush, with few religious trappings. On one side of the desk is a computer. Reverend fixes himself a drink at the wet bar then sits down behind the big desk.

Laredo and June take seats across the desk from Reverend. He opens a desk drawer and pulls out a cigar box full of i.d. chips.

REVEREND

You don't mind if I catch up on some work?

He picks up a chip and inserts it into the computer: on monitor pops up a photo of a tired, middle-aged man; under photo is his name, "JULIUS SHERTZER, CLASS C, #C7909-657-9037."

Reverend then turns to a computer printout with a list of names and crosses the appropriate one off with a red pen.

JUNE

Who's that?

LAREDO

A disease vector is my guess.

REVEREND

Yes. I'm afraid I've neglected my duties since brother Wren's demise. These chips are from Class C's that have been redlined. The Brotherhood sends them to me so that I can keep a complete record of our work.

LAREDO

God's work.

Reverend nods, hits a button and the photo blanks out. He takes out the chip and replaces it with another--an old woman: "NORMA LOPEZ, CLASS C, #C8756-345-4067."

Laredo and June watch the computer screen in horrified fascination as Reverend runs i.d. chip after i.d. chip through it.

REVEREND

Now, as I was saying, brother Wren was a wonderful man. A staunch believer in the purification of the classes. He was church treasurer. Fortunately, Mr. Dumont has offered to take over those duties.

LAREDO

Dumont. C.E.O. of The L. A. Corp?

REVEREND

Yes. He and Mr. Wren were founding members of the church. Which is why I'm appalled you think he was some sort of procurer of female flesh. The very idea is anathema.

LAREDO

You said he was on his way to a meeting of the Church board when he was killed. What was the meeting about?

REVEREND

I don't know. Brother Wren called the meeting on very short notice, but didn't say why. He was killed a block from here.

LAREDO

Are the Church board members also on the city's board of directors?

REVEREND

Most of them. Why?

LAREDO

Nothing. Who else is on the Church's board of directors?

REVEREND

I'm afraid I can't tell you that.

LAREDO

Did brother Wren have enemies on the board?

Reverend pointedly sidesteps the question.

REVEREND

We held a beautiful service for him this morning. He's with the Lord, now.

LAREDO

Hope he took his Class A i.d. with him.

Reverend glares at him.

REVEREND

If you'll excuse me, I have another meeting scheduled. You may show yourselves out.

Laredo and June rise and cross to door. June stops at door and looks back at Reverend.

JUNE

Does God really want you to kill all those poor people?

Laredo closes door on Reverend's astonished look.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

As Laredo and June walk away from Reverend's office, they step aside for two people coming toward them, Miss Davidson and PETER WREN, an arrogant, 39-year-old with boyish good looks.

JUNE
Miss Davidson?

Miss Davidson glances sharply at June but says nothing. Peter Wren eye Laredo with distaste. They enter Reverend's office.

JUNE
(continuing)
That was the school's headmistress.
She acted like she didn't know
me.

LAREDO
I usually get that treatment when
I go above level three. Recognize
the man?

June shakes her head.

EXT. 8.9 RESTAURANT (LEVEL THREE) - NIGHT

Laredo and June approach restaurant's double doors; set in bas-relief in the doors is number "8.9".

JUNE
Do you suppose there's any reason
the restaurant is named the
"eight-nine"?

LAREDO
The owner has a sense of humor.
Eight-nine is the force of the
earthquake that destroyed L.A.

INT. 8.9 RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Laredo and June have a table at rear of the room; Laredo's back is to the wall so he can keep an eye on PATRONS. A WAITRESS refills Laredo's cup of coffee, sets a fresh glass of milk in front of June and deposits the check on edge of table.

JUNE
I'm finally of legal age and I
get milk. I want some booze.

Laredo laughs.

JUNE

(continuing)

Well, I'm old enough!

LAREDO

You want to be a slush, that's your business. But not on my time. I don't allow people with malfunctioning brains around me.

JUNE

You figure one's enough, huh?

Laredo picks up a knife and fingers the edge meaningfully. June sneers disdainfully.

Laredo's eyes lock on those of a tall man, RICHARD JAEKKEL, sitting at other end of room. Laredo frowns, but his attention is drawn to the entrance as a MAITRE D' shows in TWO HEALTH INSPECTORS dressed in white linen suits. Maitre d' points in direction of Laredo and June.

All eyes in the restaurant follow Inspectors as they cross to the rear of room and stop at the table next to Laredo and June's. The young couple, MR. BAXTER and MISS KRAFT, look up nervously.

FIRST INSPECTOR

Good evening. We're with the Board of Health. May we see your i.d.'s?

The two nervously hand over their i.d. chips and Second Inspector inserts them into a hand computer. First Inspector looks at screen, pops out one of the chips and hands it to Miss Kraft. Mr. Baxter holds up his hand for his chip, but instead Second Inspector claps handcuffs on it.

SECOND INSPECTOR

Mr. Baxter, it is a violation of national health laws for a Class C citizen to patronize a Class A-B establishment. You're under arrest.

Mr. Baxter stands up on shaky feet. Miss Kraft is furious.

MISS KRAFT

You bastard! You said you were a B!

Second Inspector leads Mr. Baxter away.

FIRST INSPECTOR

Miss Kraft, you are required to submit to a complete medical exam within the next twenty-four hours for possible reclassification. Good night.

He walks off and Miss Kraft starts sobbing. Immediately, TWO BUSBOYS wearing plastic gloves come up and remove tablecloth with all the plates and implements on it. Maitre d' marches up, drops bill on bare table and leaves. With shaking fingers, Miss Kraft opens her purse, takes out a vial of blue pills and swallows several. Patrons go back to their meal.

JUNE

You think she caught something from him?

LAREDO

The odds of surviving a murder contract are better than that of surviving a night of unbridled lust and desire.

JUNE

Unbridled lust and desire...

(beat)

I've never known a Class B or C.

LAREDO

Most of the men in the military are B's and C's.

JUNE

What class are you?

LAREDO

A.

JUNE

What a coincidence! Tell me, have you ever experienced any nights of unbridled lust and desire?

LAREDO

Do I look crazy?

June smiles, but it fades when Laredo drops his hand to his shockgun as Jaekkel comes up.

JAEKKEL

Trooper Laredo?

Laredo nods. Jaekkel puts up both hands to show they're empty, then holds one out.

JAEKKEL
(continuing)
Richard Jaekkel.

Laredo reluctantly shakes his hand.

LAREDO
My client, June Monroe. June, Mr.
Jaekkel--The Republic's top
expediter.

June's welcoming smile disappears.

JAEKKEL
Don't worry, Miss Monroe--you're
in excellent hands. Expeditors
throughout the hemisphere fear
and loathe your defender almost
without exception.

LAREDO
Are we going to compliment each
other to death?

Jaekkel laughs.

JAEKKEL
I'm working another contract.
Besides, I never conduct business
in eating establishments--bad for
the digestion. I just wanted to
shake hands with the most decorated
hero of the Merger Wars. If I can
ever do you a favor...

He drops his business card on table, nods at June and leaves.
Laredo stares at the card as if expecting something to crawl out
from under it.

Maitre d' comes up and removes the check from their table.

MAITRE D'
Compliments of the house, sir.

Laredo frowns. Maitre d' gestures at Jaekkel back at his table.

MAITRE D'
(continuing)
Mr. Jaekkel is the owner.

EXT. THE ROMAN STADIUM (LEVEL THREE) - NIGHT

The amphitheater occupies an entire city block. A huge marquee

reads: "ALL-STAR GLADIATORS PRESENTS THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS." Inset into glass-covered casings along the front of the building are lifesize photos of men and women dressed in Roman gladiator regalia, wielding weapons from that era.

At entrance lobby, Laredo, arms crossed, is talking with the tuxedoed MANAGER, while keeping an eye on June, who's looking at photos of gladiators.

LAREDO

Two thousand years after the Romans staged their gladiator fights, the Republic has brought them back. That's real progress.

MANAGER

I guess people haven't changed that much in two thousand years.

Laredo nods, conceding the point. His body twists slightly to the right before returning to the straight-ahead position.

LAREDO

Are you going to honor the late Walter Wren with a moment of silence tonight?

MANAGER

Before the first bout. I wanted to reschedule the whole thing, but his brother, Peter, said no. The show must go on.

LAREDO

He inherits the company?

WREN (O.S.)

Why don't you ask me?

They turn around and confront Peter Wren. Manager walks away and stands in b.g., by the entrance doors. June joins Laredo.

WREN

I'm surprised a defender of your reputation would allow someone to sneak up on him.

LAREDO

Those things happen. Peter Wren?

Wren inclines his head almost imperceptibly and shakes hands with Laredo.

LAREDO

(continuing)

Oh, you might want to get that explosive dart out of your leg.

Wren frowns, looks down, sees an almost invisible needle piercing his right leg.

Laredo's left hand opens, revealing a small dart gun.

LAREDO

(continuing)

It's radio controlled, so there's no chance it'll go off accidentally.

Wren fearfully pulls out the needle and throws it away; Laredo presses trigger on the dart gun and the dart explodes in the air.

LAREDO

(continuing)

Good thing I recognized your foot steps from the church, huh?

June laughs, drawing a sour look from Wren, who's trying to compose himself.

WREN

This is an outrage.

LAREDO

(continuing)

I must've flunked etiquette class in school. No, wait a minute, the Republic doesn't have any schools for people who live below level four, does it?

WREN

What are you talking about?

LAREDO

Your brother. Whoever killed him, is trying to kill my client. Any idea who might've wanted him dead?

WREN

No. Probably some anti-Republican who saw his chance to kill one of the ruling class. It happens occasionally. Of course, I did tell the police about Kate.

LAREDO

Kate?

Wren gestures at life-size photo of a stunning woman dressed in a suit of gladiator armor; the armor is of simulated red and black leather, and bronze.

WREN

(continuing)

Kate McCarthy. The "Wild Irish Rose." One of our top fighters. She threatened Walter's life once.

LAREDO

When was that?

WREN

About a month ago. But the cops cleared her. She was in the showers at the time of the murder.

LAREDO

Is she fighting tonight?

WREN

She's on the next card.

LAREDO

Why were you and Miss Davidson visiting Reverend Baron, today?

WREN

We're on the church's board of directors', if it's any of your business.

LAREDO

Are you on the board of directors of any other companies? Say the Los Angeles Corporation?

WREN

Among others, yes. Now, if you wish to see the final bout, please be my guests. I have other business to attend to.

He gestures at the Manager by the entrance, who nods.

LAREDO

Thanks.

He and June start for the entrance, while Wren walks toward rear of the building. Laredo looks over his shoulder at Wren.

LAREDO

Oh, you might want to clean the
dart wound out--I forget whether
it was poisoned or not!

Wren lets out a moritified grunt and reaches for his injured leg.

Laredo merely smiles, while June and Manager laugh loudly.

INT. THE ROMAN STADIUM - NIGHT

Amphitheater is packed solid with screaming FANS. Laredo and June are shown to their seats by an USHER. June can barely restrain her excitement, but Laredo is too busy trying to spot trouble to pay attention to the earthen-floored arena below, where ANNOUNCER in a white tuxedo is introducing the final pairing.

THE ARENA

KATE McCARTHY, 23 years old, looks magnificent in a winged helmet and a flowing red cape embroidered with a black dragon holding a white rose in its mouth. DIANE ARCHER is a tall woman wearing green gladiatorial trappings and a plumed helmet.

ANNOUNCER

Introducing the main event, a
seven-minute, all-weapons contest!
The winner will face Helen "the
Viking" Vikor tomorrow night for
the championship of the Western
Hemisphere in the Unlimited
Division!

Crowd chants: "KATE - KATE - KATE!"

ANNOUNCER

(continuing)

In the green corner, weighing 133
pounds, with a record of 89 wins,
36 by knockout, nine losses, and
three draws, from the Boston
Corporation, Diane Archer!

A cascade of BOOS greets Diane as she throws off her green cape and raises fisted hands.

ANNOUNCER

(continuing)

And in the red corner, weighing
115 pounds, with a record of 102
wins, 71 by knockout, no losses
and no draws, from our own beloved
Los Angeles Corporation, Kate "the
Wild Irish Rose" McCarthy!

Crowd rises to its feet and their CHEERS are thunderous as Kate flings off her red cape and raises her arms.

Now that their capes are off, we see that fighters' arms and legs are covered with a fine steel mesh that's impervious to penetration by edged weapons; a shimmering mask of the same material covers their faces.

ANNOUNCER

(continuing)

Gladiators, to your corners!

NOISE builds up as the women return to their corners and arm themselves with short shields and swords, handed to them by their SECONDS, who attend to a weapons rack holding axes, maces, tridents, daggers and halberds.

THE STANDS

June jumps up on her seat to get a better view, screaming like a veteran fan. A GONG signals start of match.

THE ARENA

Diane leaps at Kate and showers her with a flurry of sword blows that Kate easily deflects with her shield and sword. She circles the other woman, accepting but delivering no blows of her own, before unleashing a furious attack that sends Diane reeling.

THE STANDS

Crowd resumes chanting: "KATE - KATE - KATE!" Laredo turns his attention to the arena as a powerfully built UGLY FAN starts working his way down the aisle toward June. Ugly Fan is holding one of his hands inside his sport coat.

THE ARENA

Diane flings away her sword and shield, and catches the halberd thrown by her Second. She drives the spiked end into Kate's shield, knocking her off balance long enough for her to catch the bottom of Kate's shield with the halberd's beak and tear it out of her grasp. Kate tries to fend off the longer weapon with her sword, but the halberd breaks through several times and lands with telling force on her breastplate.

THE STANDS

Crowd CHANT deteriorates into a worried groan. Ugly Fan shoves aside a patron too slow getting out of his way.

THE ARENA

Diane suddenly changes tactics and takes a swipe at Kate's legs, but Kate leaps, avoiding the blow, but when she lands, the sword is knocked out of her hand when Diane sweeps the halberd back and up. Diane now slams the blade into Kate's leg, drawing a burst of sparks from the mesh steel armor, and finishes up by smashing the spike into Kate's shoulder, knocking her down.

THE STANDS

Along with the rest of the crowd, June is concerned about the battering Kate is taking. Next to her, Ugly Fan shows YOUNG FAN what he's holding inside his coat and the man scurries away. Ugly Fan turns his attention to the arena as crowd HOWLS in dismay.

THE ARENA

Diane drives the spike point at Kate's throat, but at the last instant, Kate grabs the halberd's shaft just behind the blade and stops it a scant inch from her throat. It's a test of strength now, and Kate wins it, slowly pushing the halberd away, inch by inch, until at last she's able to gain her knees.

THE STANDS

Ugly Fan slides up behind June and pulls his hand out from inside the coat--the brass knuckles encasing his fist is tipped with razor-sharp blades.

THE ARENA

Kate stands with a sudden spring and jerks the weapon out of Diane's hands. Drawn forward by the move, Diane steps into Kate's steel-shod boot and is doubled over by a blow to her solar plexus.

THE STANDS

Crowd's chant changes to: "KILL - KILL - KILL!" Laredo's hand lashes out and grabs the bladed fist as it plunges toward June's back.

THE ARENA

Kate's mailed fist uppercuts Diane's chin and snaps her into an upright position. Another steel-fisted blow to her mesh-covered face sends red sparks flying and the woman toppling.

THE STANDS

Crowd erupts in joy, jumping, hugging each other, throwing their programs in the air. Ugly Fan and Laredo are locked in each other's hold. June is jostled this way and that by the celebrating patrons, unaware of the death struggle behind her.

THE ARENA

Announcer holds up Kate's hand in victory, while Diane tries vainly to get to her feet.

ANNOUNCER

Five minutes and six seconds into
the round, the winner by knockout,
the Wild Irish Rose, Kate McCarthy!
McCarthy!

Confetti rains on arena and SECURITY GUARDS try to protect Kate and Diane from crowd.

THE STANDS

Panic flits across Ugly Fan's face as Laredo turns the bladed hand around. The veins on Laredo's face stand out as he drives bladed fist back, inch by inch. The blades tear into Ugly Fan's stomach and he screams but it goes unheard. Laredo lets the suddenly limp man sink into the seat behind him. Laredo takes out a business card and shoves it between the dead man's lips, then grabs June's arm and hustles her away.

EXT. THE ROMAN STADIUM - NIGHT

Laredo and June rush around the corner of the building to get away from horde of fans streaming out of the stadium. Sweat is running down Laredo's face. He gulps in fresh air.

JUNE

You look like you just went seven
minutes with the Wild Irish Rose.

EXT. GLADIATORS' ENTRANCE - DAY

CROWD milling around doors gives a loud CHEER as Kate comes out, escorted by a phalanx of GUARDS. Kate is wearing a simple dress, no makeup or jewelry. Autograph books are thrust at her but the Guards hustle Kate to a blue car parked at the curb.

Across the street, Laredo and June are in the rear seat of a cab. When the blue car pulls away from curb, the cab follows it.

INT./EXT. CAB/STREET - NIGHT

June is going through the pockets of the slicker she's wearing, and comes up with an assortment of candy bars, crackers and bullets.

JUNE

Didn't the police clear her?

LAREDO

We need to talk with someone on
the inside of the company.

June pulls a neatly folded magazine page out of a pocket. She unfolds it and her mouth drops open. She holds up the picture of an extremely well-endowed nude woman.

JUNE

A friend?

Laredo calmly takes the picture, refolds it and pockets it.

EXT. CAR ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Blue car drives into a huge elevator shaft and stops at edge of an abyss. After a moment, a platform comes up and the car drives onto it. Immediately, the platform moves up the tube. Cab pulls up to the shaft and takes the next up-platform.

EXT. CAR ELEVATOR (LEVEL FOUR) - NIGHT

Blue car drives off the platform. The empty platform moves up, to be replaced by the one bearing the cab.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Blue car stops in front of an apartment building and lets Kate out, then drives off.

Kate opens the lobby door by placing a palm on a scanning plate next to it, but as she enters, the door catches the reflection of the cab pulling up to the curb behind her. She lets the door slam shut behind her and calmly crosses to the elevator.

When Laredo and June reach the front door, they find it locked. Laredo brings out a tube of grease, spreads some of it on one hand, then puts that hand on the scanning plate. The door opens.

JUNE

Where'd you get that stuff?

LAREDO

A friend of mine in the Burglars
Association invented it.

They enter the lobby and stop in front of the directory.

Outside, a helmeted MOTORCYCLE RIDER slowly cruises down the street. The Rider glances at lobby of Kate's apartment building as he passes in front of it.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Laredo and June step out of the elevator and glance at the door numbers as they walk down the hallway.

JUNE

The directory said three-one-three.

A linen closet door pops open and Kate leaps out in a flying kick that catches Laredo in the chest and sends him crashing into a wall. June scrambles out of the way.

Kate hits Laredo with a volley of head punches that sends him to the floor. June growls and jumps on Kate's back but Kate easily flips her off.

Laredo gets to his feet and Kate immediately steps in and flips him over her shoulder into a wall. Then she launches a vicious kick at his head, but this time Laredo catches her foot in one hand and knocks her down.

Laredo and Kate regain their feet simultaneously. She spins around and tries to catch him with a backward kick, but he easily bats her foot aside.

Kate moves in again and punches him in the solar plexus with one fist and uppercuts him with other, but neither blow has any effect.

June, sitting on the sidelines where she landed, smiles.

JUNE

You're in trouble now.

Kate tries a groin kick but Laredo knocks her feet out from under her and she crashes to the floor. Laredo falls on her and pins her down. She struggles for a few seconds before giving up.

KATE

What are you going to do--kiss
me?

Laredo stares into her defiant eyes for a moment then kisses her. She writhes angrily, but too readily accepts her fate.

June looks on in disgust--and jealousy.

JUNE

You're in real trouble now.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The living room is spacious and the furnishings tasteful. Laredo and June are sitting on opposite ends of a couch.

Kate finishes pouring tea, sets the teapot down on the table in front of the couch, then sits between the two.

Laredo gingerly feels his new bruises while June broods.

KATE

Wally took me to a party a month ago and introduced me to one of his friends. His friend wanted me to entertain him, so I did--I broke his nose. Then I told Wally if he ever set me up like that again, I'd cut off various parts of his anatomy and feed them to his fish.

Laredo bursts out laughing and June coughs on her tea. Kate takes a deliberate sip of her tea, while studying Laredo.

LAREDO

Was he in the habit of setting up dates for his gladiators?

KATE

He only did it occasionally. And then only for those who were Class A. Fact is, most of the girls didn't mind--you do have to think about your future, once your fighting days are over. Fortunately, I still have a couple of good rounds left in me.

LAREDO

Yes, we were at the arena. You were very beautiful--I mean good.

Kate smiles. June makes a face, gets up and goes to a window.

KATE

I'm going for the national title, tomorrow night.

JUNE

I'll probably be dead by then.

Laredo glances at her.

LAREDO

If not sooner.

(to Kate)

Do you remember the names of any of the men at the party you went to?

KATE

No. Sorry.

LAREDO

We need some names of people who knew Walter Wren.

KATE

You've only got--what, 26 hours?--until the contract expires. Why don't you just lie low?

LAREDO

And impersonate a corpse? No thanks. The best defense is a good offense.

KATE

Was that your philosophy in the mountain troops?

LAREDO

How did you know I was in the mountain troops?

KATE

You'd be surprised how much people know about you. The things they say about you.

LAREDO

People ought to mind their own business.

(beat)

What things?

Kate chuckles.

KATE

Let's just say I feel very flattered sharing my couch with you.

June groans.

Laredo looks away, embarrassed.

Smiling, Kate stands up to refill their cups, then sits down closer to Laredo. She holds the teacup to her lips, meets his eyes, and gently blows the steam at him. Laredo quickly gets lost in her eyes, only half paying attention to her words.

KATE

(continuing)

Anyway, to get back to your problem, I know a girl who may be able to help you. She left the gladiator company last year after Wally set her up with one of his fellow board members. Tamara Knox is her name. I'll try to get in touch with her.

Laredo nods.

LAREDO

Huh...? Oh, great. Thanks.

He nods, sets his cup down on table. As he sits back, his hand "accidentally" brushes against Kate's leg.

June rolls her eyes up.

JUNE

Oh that was smooth.

Laredo and Kate ignore her.

LAREDO

What was Walter Wren like?

KATE

He liked women. Lots of them. It's amazing he was able to maintain his Class A status, what with all the diseases floating around. Did I mention I was Class A?

JUNE

You're out of luck. He's a Class C. And a spreader.

Laredo shakes his head.

KATE

Wally liked to throw money around. And he was funny. He was ambitious, too--he wanted to be C.E.O. of a major city.

LAREDO

What about his brother, Peter?

KATE

A complete flameout. He worships the bottom line. He cuts corners every chance he gets. The jerk even makes us fight when we're hurt.

LAREDO

A real Prince Charming.

KATE

Yeah, whoever he is. Peter Wren makes my skin crawl. The other girls all say the same thing.

LAREDO

Did Peter and Walter get along?

KATE

Couldn't stand each other. Walter owned the company and Peter ran it. Now Peter owns it, too, and I'm getting the hell out of L.A. tomorrow night when I win the championship.

LAREDO

Oh.

They stare at each other for a few more moments, then Laredo picks up his slicker and hat.

LAREDO

Thanks for everything.

KATE

You're welcome. To everything.

June picks up her slicker from a chair and rushes to the door.

KATE

(continuing)

I'll start tracking down Tammy's phone number right away. I'll give you my phone chip.

Kate gets her phone from the purse, while Laredo pulls his from the slicker. They turn the phones over and pop out a spare locator chip. Their hands touch as they exchange chips.

JUNE

Great, now you two will be able to find each other any time, and that'll come in real handy when I get killed, 'cause I want you both at my funeral.

June pulls Laredo to door.

JUNE

(continuing)

By the way, did I mention that I have no money to pay for Mr. Laredo's services, so he's agreed to accept my sexual favors in payment? He really is a wonderful man.

Laredo and June exit. Kate closes the door, laughing.

EXT. STREET (LEVEL THREE) - NIGHT

Laredo and June are walking down the sidewalk. June is looking wide-eyed at the wildly painted, electric-powered cars cruising the street, and the wilder-looking TEENAGERS in them, who're yelling obscenities at each other and at PEDESTRIANS. All of the people appear stoned or sick.

JUNE

Why is everyone acting crazy--or looks sick.

LAREDO

Eighty percent of the population are Class B citizens--drug addicts; and 50 percent are Class C--disease carriers.

JUNE

I'm no Einstein, but that comes out to 130 percent.

LAREDO

Einstein would've figured out that a lot of the druggies are disease carriers, and vice versa.

JUNE

Oh, yeah? What was his first name?

LAREDO

Albert.

JUNE

Lucky guess.

(beat)

So if there are so many sick people, why don't they invent medicines to cure them?

LAREDO

There's no profit in it for the Medical Corporation.

June's eyes catch the glitter of cheap jewelry and gaudy clothing in a store window and she dashes toward it. Inside the store, KIDS are fighting for choice items of apparel.

JUNE

I have to get some real clothes. And jewelry. And makeup. And maybe a tattoo.

LAREDO

Not tonight.

He pulls June away from window as a group of howling, chain-swinging BOYS rush the store. A couple of the boys brush past Laredo and June and dive through a store window.

Laredo pats the slicker pocket the boy brushed against, then hurriedly drags June away from there and down a side street.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Laredo all but pushes June into the lobby of a motel/drug emporium named the "PARADISE INN."

JUNE

Hey, what's the hurry?

INT. PARADISE INN - LOBBY - NIGHT

The glass and chrome lobby is watched over by a bright-eyed CLERK standing behind a long counter that doubles as an exotic-fish aquarium.

Laredo all but drags June to the aquarium/counter. Clerk looks June up and down, appreciatively. When June sees the fish, she stops fighting Laredo so he lets go of her.

While Laredo bargains with the Clerk, June presses her face up against the aquarium and makes faces at the equally strange creatures on the other side of the glass.

CLERK

Welcome to the Paradise Inn.

LAREDO

What's that?

CLERK

I said welcome to the Paradise Inn!

LAREDO

Me and my squeeze of lemon here need a room.

Both June and the Clerk give Laredo a frown at his choice of words.

CLERK

Uh, certainly. Will you be requiring recreational potions?

LAREDO

Sure. Give me the house special. And the best room in the house.

CLERK

Yes sir! Today's drug special is a double-packet of Happy Trails. It's guaranteed to put you in orbit.

He reaches behind the counter and brings out a two-gram, twin-packet of green dust. He places the packet and a registration card on the countertop.

CLERK

(continuing)

The emperor's room is 100 dollars an hour and the Happy Trails is 50. Now if you'll just put your X there...

Laredo takes the proffered pen and puts a big X on the card. The Clerk brings out the room key and holds it in his hand.

CLERK

(continuing)

That'll be 150 dollars for an hour.

Laredo pulls several bills out of his wallet and drops them on the counter, then jerks the key out of the confused Clerk's hand, and rips off one of the packs.

LAREDO

We'll only need the room for ten minutes. And we only need one happy trail.

CLERK

But...

Laredo grabs June by the shoulders and leads her to the stairs.

LAREDO

Let's hurry, darling!

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

June tries to hang back but Laredo is having none of it. He rushes her up the stairs.

JUNE

What're you going to do?

LAREDO

What do you think a man and a woman do when they're all alone with only a happy trail between them?

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The carpeting is very plush under Laredo and June as they walk down the hall. June glances with growing concern at the garish paintings of naked women and men and animals performing bizarre and/or disgusting acts.

Laredo mistakenly opens a couple of doors. The first room holds a nude couple rolling on the floor, whether they're fighting or just frolicking is unclear.

The second room is an orgy scene. The intertwined bodies, in various stages of undress, are obscured by a thick haze of narcotic smoke. A long snake starts slithering for the door so Laredo quickly slams the door shut.

June is aghast as Laredo finally finds their door and unlocks it. Laredo grabs her elbow and shoves her inside.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

June looks in disgust at the red and white furnishings, especially the oversized, mirrored bed.

JUNE

Oh my God. This isn't the way I
thought it would be.

Laredo nudges her to the bed.

LAREDO

But hon, I've been waiting a
lifetime to unbridle my lust and
desire.

JUNE

Couldn't you bridle it in for a
while longer?

Laredo brings out the packet of Happy Trails and tosses it on the
bed.

LAREDO

Well, what're you waiting for?

June looks into Laredo's face with her teary eyes and her chin
quivers. She closes her eyes and stands there, waiting for him to
do as he will.

Laredo takes her in his arms--and his left hand goes into one of
June's slicker pockets and comes out holding a miniature bug.
He pulls out its twin from one of his own slicker pockets and
tosses them on the bed next to the Happy Trails packet.

June's lips purse, waiting for the inevitable kiss. Laredo smiles.
June cracks open an eyelid, wondering what the hold-up is. When
Laredo sweeps her up in his arms, she closes her eye again and
sighs, resigned to her fate.

Laredo turns around and walks out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

When Laredo slams the door shut behind him, June opens her eyes
and is dismayed.

JUNE

Hey, what's the idea?

Laredo carries the struggling girl around the nearby turn in the
hallway and sets her down on her feet.

JUNE

(continuing)

First you sweep a girl off her
feet, then you sweep her out into
the hall.

Laredo claps a hand over her mouth and looks around the corner of the hallway:

An expediter dressed as a NINJA slithers up the hallway toward the room Laredo and June have just vacated. He raises the hand cannon he's holding, kicks the door in, and sprays the room with exploding projectiles.

A few doors open up and down the hallway, and some HEADS pop out to see what's happening but quickly duck back inside.

June squeezes her eyes shut and clutches Laredo tightly. Laredo draws his shockgun, and when the shooting stops, steps around the corner of the hallway.

The Ninja smiles, ejects the spent clip from his weapon, loads a fresh one, and waits for the smoke to clear from the devastated room.

LAREDO

You blew away my happy trail.

Ninja whirls around. Laredo puts a round in Ninja's stomach that splits the body in half, and he snatches the cannon out of the air as it flies out of the lifeless fingers. He drop it into a slicker pocket.

June takes a quick peek at the grisly sight and almost throws up.

Laredo flicks one of his business cards at the upper half of the body, takes June by a hand and urges her toward the stairway.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

The Clerk is still behind the counter, paralyzed with fear, as Laredo and June come bounding down the stairway.

LAREDO

You have big rats in this place,
citizen!

EXT. STREET/ALLEY - NIGHT

Laredo surveys the street as he and June run out of the motel. Crossing one of the intersections is a helmeted MOTORCYCLE RIDER. Laredo frowns when he sees the rider and files it away for future consideration.

Laredo shoves the cannon into a trash receptacle, then pulls June into an alley.

Midway down the alley, he bends down and lifts open a manhole cover.

LAREDO
Down the hatch.

June looks down the black hole disapprovingly.

JUNE
It's dark!

Laredo pulls a flashlight out of his slicker and shines its beam into the hole.

LAREDO
Move it!

June complies reluctantly and Laredo follows her down, letting the manhole cover drop down into place behind him.

INT. UNDERSTREET TUNNEL - NIGHT

Massive supporting beams, sewer, water and power mains criss-cross chaotically. Spiderwebs of stairs and catwalks lead up, down, and across the 50-foot-deep labyrinth separating the level three street from the level two ceiling.

Laredo leads the way down the catwalk, his flashlight pointing the way. June follows directly behind Laredo, concentrating intently on negotiating the narrow pathway.

LAREDO
What in the hell did you do to
make someone send three expeditors
after you in only 12 hours?

JUNE
You can't count that last smograt
twice just because you blew him
in half.

(snorts)
First you lure me to a palace of
perverted sexual pleasures and
fail to do your manly duty by me,
and now you're exaggerating your
martial prowess.

LAREDO
I should've let that guy at the
arena have his way with you.

JUNE
What are you talking about?

Laredo doesn't answer.

JUNE

(continuing)

This is very unfair. I've been a good girl all my life; never gave anyone any trouble; always did my homework; kept my room neat; never went over the fence at night looking for boys.

Laredo laughs skeptically.

JUNE

(continuing)

OK, so maybe I did do some of those things, but that's no reason for anyone to kill me, is it?

LAREDO

No, so it has to be something your benefactor did. Or knew. Are you sure all he said that night was "tomorrow?"

JUNE

Uh-huh. He must've been dying when he made the call, huh?

LAREDO

Yes. So it was important. Too bad he didn't finish what he wanted to say.

They walk on in silence.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - BASEMENT - NIGHT

The floor hatch leading to the tunnel lifts slightly and Laredo looks out to make sure the boiler room is empty. Satisfied, he throws the hatch open and climbs out. June follows him up.

JUNE

Where are we?

LAREDO

I lease an apartment in this building for just these circumstances.

Laredo reaches for a light fixture on the low ceiling and pulls down--a heavy hatch drops open. Laredo hoists June through the hatch and she disappears into the black room above.

Laredo jumps up, grabs the edge of the floor above and pulls himself up. His arm snakes down, grabs the light fixture and pulls it shut.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

Laredo is stretched out on a sofa, reading the Adler book he brought with him from his aboveground apartment. June enters the room, freshly bathed, wearing a flannel nightgown.

JUNE

How long?

Laredo glances at his watch.

LAREDO

Twenty-three hours to go. You should be in bed.

JUNE

How come there's women's clothes in the closet?

LAREDO

Some of the clients leave things behind.

June snorts, glances about the room nervously.

LAREDO

(continuing)

Relax. This is a special room. The walls, floors and ceiling are steel reinforced. It'd take a hand nuke to break in.

JUNE

Lovely thought. You have anything I can read?

LAREDO

Never had a client who could read.

He sits up, pulls the paperback out of slicker and tosses it at her. She plops herself down on the far end of the sofa.

JUNE

This looks dumb.

LAREDO

It's a detective. Be careful with it. It's a hundred years old.

June opens the book at random and starts reading. Laredo swings his feet back onto sofa, but can't stretch his legs out because of June.

LAREDO

(continuing)

As long as you're sitting there,
why don't you take my boots off?

JUNE

What do I look like? Your slave?

She flips through the book.

JUNE

(continuing)

There's only one bed in this deluxe
suite. I don't mind sharing it
with you. If I have to.

LAREDO

You're sitting on my bed.

JUNE

Oh... Hey, what does this mean?

(reading)

"You don't know shit from Shinola."

LAREDO

Shinola is a town in Montana.

June nods, continues reading--and starts nodding off.

ONE HOUR LATER

Laredo is asleep on the couch, the book he was reading on the floor. June is also sleeping--curled up at his feet on the far end of the couch, the book she was reading still held in her hand. The light is still on.

The phone RINGS and Laredo starts into wakefulness, knocking June onto the floor head first. June's position on the floor and her yelp confuses Laredo momentarily, before the RINGING phone makes him dive for his slicker on the coffee table.

June massages her head and glares at Laredo as he takes the phone from the slicker pocket and answers it.

LAREDO

Hello.

KATE (V.O.)

Trooper, it's Kate. I hope you don't mind my calling you this late.

LAREDO

Of course not. What is it?

KATE (V.O.)

It's about Tammy. I called a couple of friends, and one of them got hold of her. Tammy just called me. She sounds scared. Wants to meet us.

LAREDO

Where and when?

KATE (V.O.)

Westwood Park on level seven. In half an hour. I told her we'd meet her there.

LAREDO

We?

KATE

Be careful.

She hangs up before Laredo can argue. Laredo returns Kate's glare.

LAREDO

Women.

EXT. WESTWOOD PARK (LEVEL SEVEN) - NIGHT

Laredo and June step off the moving walkway and cautiously approach the perimeter of the dark park. Widely spaced street lights provide the only illumination. Laredo suddenly stops and his hand grips the butt of his holstered shotgun. After a moment, his hand strays away from the gun.

LAREDO

Kate.

Kate steps out from behind one of the many trees screening the park from the street.

KATE

You can see through trees?

LAREDO

I recognized your perfume.

KATE

Hah. It's soap not perfume. Maybe you're not as great as everyone says.

JUNE

That's what I've been trying to tell him all night.

Kate grins.

LAREDO

Have you seen her?

KATE

Tammy said she'd meet us by the Bruin fountain.

Laredo nods, leads the way into the park.

LAREDO

If you two are going to come, try to be quiet.

June and Kate nod--and proceed to step on every twig and leaf on the ground. Laredo grits his teeth but says nothing more as he works his way through the trees.

EXT. BRUIN FOUNTAIN - NIGHT

A bronze statue of bear and a bench occupy the opening in the park. The bear is spitting water into a fountain. A woman is sitting on the bench, her back to the approaching trio. Next to the bench is a "tree" that's glowing with a blue light, effectively illuminating the area.

Laredo stops at the edge of the opening and surveys the opening.

LAREDO

That her?

Kate nods and trots toward the bench before Laredo can stop her. Laredo shakes his head in disgust and runs after her, June in tow.

KATE

Tammy.

TAMMY doesn't move. Kate touches her on the shoulder and the woman slumps over, revealing her blood-soaked back. The dead woman's red hair falls limply over the edge of the bench. Kate jumps back, stifling a scream.

Laredo shoves Kate and June back to the trees, then pulls out his shockgun and shoots the illuminated tree. The tree sparks and splinters and the light goes out. Then the bear is blown apart by a hand cannon bolt that arcs in from among the trees on the far side.

Laredo fires a shot in the general direction the explosive bolt came from, then runs after the other two.

Explosions follow Laredo, June and Kate as they run through the park.

EXT. WESTWOOD PARK - NIGHT

The three of them dash out of the park, then dash right back in as a police car roars up the street and stops a short distance away. TWO COPS, guns drawn, get out of the car and rush into the park.

Laredo strolls up to the car, looks around, then slides in behind the wheel. He gestures at Kate and June and they reluctantly get in next to him. He starts the engine and speeds away from the curb.

EXT./INT. STREET/POLICE CAR - NIGHT

Kate and June are nervous--as much by Laredo's driving as by being in a hot cop car.

LAREDO

Good thing poeople on level seven
get such quick police response.

KATE

You're crazy.

JUNE

And not a very good driver.

Laredo proves her point by skidding into a turn, almost ploughing into a brick fence surrounding a mansion.

JUNE

(continuing)

Oh my God, I'm going to be killed
by my own defender.

LAREDO

Who was Tammy's keeper?

KATE

She never told anyone. Some board member of some corporation or other.

LAREDO

I think we were set up, whether Tammy knew it or not. There's no way a sextoy like Tammy could've gotten or made a phone call without the owner knowing about it.

JUNE

So they killed that poor girl just to trap us. To kill me.

She closes her eyes and sinks back into the seat.

JUNE

(continuing)

This has been a very bad day for me.

KATE

And for Tammy. Did an expediter do it?

LAREDO

No. She was shot in the back. Expediters don't kill unarmed pigeons that way.

LAREDO

Hold onto your hats.

June and Kate brace themselves as Laredo brings the car to a screeching stop.

EXT. ELEVATOR BANK - NIGHT

Kate and June get out of the car and Laredo speeds up again. The front door opens and Laredo tumbles out. He rolls several times before jumping to his feet, unharmed.

The car continues down the street--right into a car elevator housing and down the empty shaft.

Laredo dusts his hands off and trots past the women and they follow him.

KATE

Think that'll throw the cops off?

LAREDO

I don't know, but I've always
wanted to do it.

They continue past the elevators and stop opposite a featureless door set into a blank wall. Laredo brings out a tubular key and unlocks the door.

LAREDO

A level seven client gave me this
key as a bonus.

The door opens and June and Kate step into the darkness beyond.

INT. PRIVATE ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Laredo closes the outer door, which automatically turns on the overhead lighting, revealing the cramped chamber. Laredo hits the up button and the elevator shoots up at a fast speed.

LAREDO

There are a lot of private
elevators leading to the top for
the exclusive use of level seven
citizens. In case of an earthquake,
they think they'll have time to
make their escape.

He laughs derisively.

JUNE

I thought you said it was illegal
to hide out on the surface.

LAREDO

It is. But whoever took out the
contract on you has already taken
a lot of liberties with the rules.
So caveat emptor.

The elevator comes to a stop and the door opens.

INT. ELEVATOR ANTEROOM - NIGHT

The lights come on automatically as the three step out of the elevator. Laredo opens a closet door and pulls out a plain cape for Kate.

LAREDO

Compliments of level seven.

Kate puts the cape on and follows June and Laredo into the second, smaller chamber.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - ABOVEGROUND - NIGHT

A furious rain and wind storm is lashing the surface. The elevator housing door opens and Laredo, June and Kate drop their face shields down before running into the maelstrom.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Frequent lightning bolts illuminate the way as the three plunge recklessly through the debris, mud and rain puddles, uncaring of the curious glances from the people who've taken shelter around camp fires in their concrete and steel caves.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Laredo lowers his head as a blast of wind drives deadly rain into his faceplate. Kate and June are each hanging onto one of his arms, fighting to maintain their footing.

EXT. LAREDO'S BUILDING - NIGHT

The three reach the doorway and Laredo fumbles for the key to the lock. June and Kate huddle against him as another blast of wind and rain hits them.

INT. LAREDO'S BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Laredo closes the door after Kate and June rush in.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Laredo's flashlight points the way up the stairs for June and Kate, who are preceding him.

JUNE

This sure has been some night,
hasn't it, Trooper?

Laredo grunts.

JUNE

(continuing)

First we had a very exciting time
at the Paradise Inn. Then we went
to Trooper's secret love nest and
were sleeping together when you
called up.

KATE

Is that true, Trooper?

Laredo shines the flashlight on June's sweetly innocent face.

LAREDO

The words she's saying are true,
but the way she's saying them is
a lie--and your nose is growing,
Miss Monroe.

June feels her nose and shakes her head.

JUNE

No, it's not. But other parts of
me are, and a smart man would be
wise to take advantage of it,
before they get too big for one
man to handle.

KATE

Well, now that you mention it,
it does look like you're putting
on some weight.

Laredo and Kate laugh. June sneers at them and runs up the stairs.

INT. DINING ALCOVE - LATER - NIGHT

Laredo and Kate are at a table, cups of coffee in front of them.
Laredo is still wearing his dirty clothes; Kate is wearing a robe,
but her face is smudged and her hair disheveled. Laredo is holding
the framed photo of himself and his parents.

KATE

Your parents?

LAREDO

(continuing)

Yes. They were killed when I was
thirteen. A business competitor
put a murder contract on them.

Kate takes one of his hands in hers.

KATE

I'm sorry.

LAREDO

I spent three years in an L-one
orphanage. It took me five years
in the Defense Corp to pay the
Republic back for that privilege.

KATE

But you stayed in another five
years.

LAREDO

I thought those kids needed me around to keep them alive. We killed seventy thousand Canucks at the battle of the Yukon River. The snow was red from horizon to horizon. That's when I decided to get out.

He gets up from the table and takes the photo back to the living room. When he comes back, he's carrying his shockgun and cleaning equipment. He spreads a cloth on the table and starts stripping the weapon.

LAREDO

So why did you become a gladiator?

KATE

My parents were both Class B, but my mother managed to stay off drugs long enough for me to be born a Class A. It killed her. My father overdosed when I was five.

LAREDO

So you owed the Republic for the eleven years' room and board at the orphanage.

KATE

Uh-huh. The job counselors gave me two options: work for The Recreation Corp as a joygirl, or become a surrogate mother. As a Class A, I could pay off my debt after only six or seven babies. I had other ideas.

LAREDO

Gladiator.

KATE

Yes. I paid off The Republic last year. If I win tomorrow night, I'm off to Tokyo for the world title. And win or lose, I'm not coming back to L.A.

Laredo nods. The silence is broken by June's entrance. She's wearing a bathrobe and scrubbing her hair dry with a towel.

JUNE

Miss me?

LAREDO

Sure. We have to go back down in a few hours, so why don't you try to get some sleep?.

JUNE

What are you two going to do?

LAREDO

Kate's going to take a shower, and I'm going to finish cleaning my shockgun.

She looks at them skeptically.

JUNE

Well...okay...

She leaves the room reluctantly and Kate and Laredo exchange smiles.

KATE

Why don't you take a shower first, and let me finish cleaning the gun for you--I know weapons. Please.

Laredo nods gratefully.

INT. SHOWER STALL - NIGHT

Laredo's eyes are shut tight. Jets of hot water lash his body.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER - NIGHT

The desk lamp is lit, leaving most of the room in darkness. Laredo is sitting on the floor, staring out a window. The storm is subsiding.

Kate appears at the doorway, her damp hair framing her freshly scrubbed face. She's wearing a shirt that reaches down to her knees. She crosses the room and sits down next to Laredo.

KATE

It's so dark.

LAREDO

When I was a kid, I can remember some nights were so bright you could see for miles.

KATE

Street lights?

LAREDO

The moon.

KATE

Moon?

LAREDO

Up there. Above that sea of poison.
It shines like a cool, white sun.
And stars. Thousands of stars.

KATE

Stars?

LAREDO

They're suns. A long way off in
outer space.

KATE

You're making fun of me.

Laredo laughs gently.

LAREDO

They're out there. As bright and
clean as always, only we can't
see them. We don't deserve to see
them.

Silence.

KATE

They probably weren't good for
anything, anyway.

LAREDO

I think it was against the law
to have romance without them.

KATE

Romance? Is that something like
the moon and stars?

LAREDO

Yes.

His hand glides up her arm, across her shoulder, caresses her
neck, then cups her chin. Kate eagerly meets his lips with hers.
His hand slides down inside her shirt and she draws in her breath.

KATE

What're you doing?

His hand moves to top button of her shirt and undoes it.

LAREDO
Don't you know?

KATE
I've heard stories...

His hand goes to the second button.

KATE
(continuing)
How many times have you done this?

LAREDO
None.

KATE
Good.

She leans back and half-closes her eyes. He opens her shirt and kisses her breasts. Kate manages to talk between gasps.

KATE
(continuing)
You sure this is the right way?

LAREDO
I read a book...

She runs her hands through his hair.

KATE
I hope you read the whole book.

LAREDO
It had pictures.

KATE
Ooh...good...

She reaches for the top button of his shirt but has trouble undoing it. Frustrated, she rips the shirt open and kisses his chest hungrily. Laredo takes her in his arms and stands.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laredo gently lays Kate on the bed and she slides under the covers. He takes his clothes off and her eyes feast on his body.

KATE
Is it supposed to do that?

LAREDO
We'll find out.

She laughs, holds the covers aside and he gets in next to her. He covers her mouth with his and works his body on top of hers.

KATE

Yes, that feels right.

After a few moments, Kate laughs wildly.

KATE

(continuing)

No, that doesn't feel right.

Laredo, perplexed, looks south.

LAREDO

You sure?

He repositions himself and this draws another peal of laughter from Kate--which ends in a gasp of pain. Startled, Laredo tries to pull away but she draws him tighter to her.

KATE

No!

(beat)

The book...

Kate lets out a long moan, half pain, half pleasure.

KATE

(continuing)

Finish the damn book.

LAREDO

It's a long one.

Kate sighs pleurably.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

June is in bed, staring out the dark window. A tear streams down her cheek.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

WIND whistling through ruined city is echoed by plaintive WAILING of wild dogs.

INT. LAREDO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laredo is standing at the window, looking out at the sky. Kate is still in bed, staring across the darkened room at him. A gust of wind rattles the windows.

LAREDO

There--a star.

Kate slowly gets out of bed and joins him. He puts an arm around her and points out a bright pinpoint of light in the dark sky that's been unveiled by the scudding clouds.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Kate and June watch silently as Laredo straps the shockgun on one hip, then an automatic grenade launcher on the other. He clips several grenade magazines onto the belt, then attaches a tubular grenade on other side of the belt.

KATE

What's that?

Laredo hands Kate and June a pair of dark goggles.

LAREDO

Actinic grenade. These glasses will keep you from going blind. I've been saving it for a special occasion.

Neither woman seems particularly thrilled at their new eyewear.

Laredo picks up his slicker and hat, and looks around the room one last time.

LAREDO

Ready?

For answer, June puts on her slicker and Kate picks up her cape.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAWN

June is slightly ahead of Laredo and Kate as they walk through the dead city.

JUNE

I thought tomorrow would never come.

KATE

What?

JUNE

I said I thought tomorrow would never come.

KATE

Oh. I thought you said something about Tamara.

After a couple more steps, Laredo stops dead in his tracks. The other two stop and look at him questioningly.

LAREDO

Tomorrow. Tamara. Walter Wren was trying to tell you something about Tamara, not tomorrow.

He resumes walking, at a quicker pace, and June and Kate hurry to keep up.

JUNE

But I didn't even know her.

They turn down the street leading to the private elevator housing.

LAREDO

No, but Wren was your benefactor, and he set up Tammy with her new owner. Somehow he thought you could get a warning to her.

KATE

So how come the killer took out a legal contract on June, but not on Tammy?

LAREDO

Because murder-designates must be given at least three hours notice. Tammy would've talked to us by the time the contract could take effect.

KATE

So it was my looking for her that got her killed...

Kate covers her mouth with her hands to stifle an urge to be sick. Laredo puts an arm around her shoulders. June averts her gaze from them and walks even faster.

LAREDO

No. She called you and told you she was scared, remember? She was killed because she knew Walter Wren.

Kate nods, though obviously not fully convinced.

INT. PRIVATE ELEVATOR - DAY

The three of them are lost in their own thoughts as the elevator plunges down toward the buried city.

Suddenly Laredo turns on June, startling her.

LAREDO
Your best friend in school. The
one who graduated last year.

JUNE
Debbie. Debra Taylor.

LAREDO
You said she had a new friend on
the outside.

JUNE
Yeah. One of Wally's ex-gladiators.
I told you that.

Laredo looks at Kate, who nods in understanding.

KATE
Tamara Knox.

EXT. UNDERGROUND LOS ANGELES - (LEVEL SEVEN) - NIGHT

The blank door to the private elevator opens and the three come out. They hurriedly survey the area for cops as they jog to the public elevator bank farther down the street.

EXT. ELEVATOR BANK (LEVEL FOUR) - DAY

Laredo, Kate and June are among a small group of people that get out of the elevator.

They cross to a railing overlooking the magnificent city. June puts a little distance between her and Laredo and Kate.

KATE
It's so beautiful. And yet...

LAREDO
"Such welcome and unwelcome things
at once, 'Tis hard to reconcile."

Kate looks at him, mystified.

LAREDO
(continuing)
William Shakespeare. He went around
inventing famous sayings.

She takes one of his hands.

KATE

See you at the fight, tonight?

LAREDO

Probably not. Too dangerous.

Kate nods, disappointed, and Laredo kisses her. A monorail rumbles to a stop behind them. Kate breaks free and runs to the train.

She stops at the door and looks back at him for a moment, then disappears inside.

Laredo watches the train leave and touches his mouth where Kate's lips touched his.

LAREDO

Come on. The next train is ours.

He reaches for June's arm but she eludes his grasp. He shakes his head in exasperation, and starts for the monorail stop, his eyes constantly scanning the area for trouble. June follows a few feet behind.

EXT. LOS ANGELES CORPORATION TOWER - DAY

A monorail stops at a landing attached to the city's tallest building in the city's central hub. Laredo and June get out of the train.

JUNE

What is this place?

LAREDO

The Los Angeles Corporation Tower.
They run the city and Philip Dumont runs the corporation.

INT. L.A. CORPORATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Laredo and June are the object of attention as they make their way through hallway--and this makes June feel more like her old self.

JUNE

Why are we here?

LAREDO

Reverend Baron said Dumont was a founding member of the Church of Pure Blood. Maybe he knows why Wren called that church meeting. The one he was on the way to when he was killed.

INT. PENTHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

The four walls of the huge office are of glass, affording a panoramic view of the city. An elevator platform rises into the room and Laredo and June step off.

PHILIP DUMONT, a broad-shouldered, athletic man of forty-five, walks around the desk, smiling, and shakes hands with them.

DUMONT

A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Mike Laredo, Miss June Monroe. Reverend Baron called me yesterday and told me I might be getting a visit from you. Can I get you a drink. Drugs, perhaps?

Laredo shakes his head and the hopeful look on June's face disappears.

DUMONT

(continuing)

Excellent! I disapprove of such stimulants myself. Please make yourselves comfortable.

June immediately heads for the nearest glass wall and looks out at the city.

LAREDO

You disapprove of drugs? Board members of The Republic Corporation are descendants of the drug lords who founded this corporacy.

DUMONT

You make it sound as if it were something to be ashamed of. The drug lords, as you so quaintly put it, were merely filling one of society's needs. They couldn't very well operate under the archaic constitutional system then in force. Naturally they changed the rules when they took over. It's sound business practice.

LAREDO

Naturally. Since you talked with the Reverend, then you know why I'm here.

Dumont sits on edge of desk.

DUMONT

I do, Mike--may I call you Mike?

LAREDO

All my friends do.

DUMONT

Excellent. Please call me Phil. I don't stand on formality--too much work to do and not enough time. People envy me my job, but do you know that I'm here till two, three a.m., every night?

LAREDO

Life's a smog bowl, Phil. About Walter Wren...

DUMONT

Yes. Very disturbing. I can't say I was close to him, but he was Class A all the way. The police have linked his murder to anti-Republicans.

LAREDO

Oh? I didn't know there were any.

DUMONT

A few. Fifty years after America's deconstitution, some people still can't accept reality. Fortunately, people like you make The Republic invulnerable to these revanchist elements.

LAREDO

I'm just a defender.

Dumont smiles, picks up a folder from desk and opens it. He pulls out a photo of a young Laredo in military uniform.

DUMONT

Ten years in the trenches fighting The Republic's wars. The Defense Corporation's most decorated veteran. And in your three years as a defender, you've never lost a client. The system works and you're living proof.

Dumont claps Laredo on shoulder and walks to a huge globe of the world.

Laredo catches June staring at him from across the room. He looks away.

Dumont spins the globe until the Western Hemisphere is facing them. This part of the globe is colored a uniform blue from the Arctic to the Antarctic.

DUMONT

(continuing)

The Republic and its subsidiaries own the Western Hemisphere. But there aren't enough good Class A's to run the shop. Buenos Aires, for instance, will be needing a new C.E.O. at the end of the year. I think you're executive material.

LAREDO

Thanks, but I don't like suits.

Dumont spins the globe again and stabs a finger at Japan, which, along with most of Asia, including China, is colored yellow.

DUMONT

Your own division in the Defense Corporation? Maybe even an army group. War with the Yellow Empire is inevitable. The opportunities are boundless.

LAREDO

I don't like uniforms, either. About these anti-Republicans...

Dumont shrugs, walks back to the desk, picks up a second folder.

DUMONT

The Republic's had its eye on you for a long time, Mike. I'm sure we'll be able to come up with an offer you can't refuse. As to the crims who killed Walter Wren-

He opens the folder and out slide five photos of young men and some police forms.

DUMONT

(continuing)

-they were captured last night and tried only an hour ago.

Laredo flips through the photos and stares at the last one.

DUMONT
(continuing)
They were executed ten minutes
ago.

Laredo is momentarily nonplused. He hands the photos back to Dumont.

LAREDO
Thanks, Phil.

The men shake hands. Laredo and June step on the elevator. Platform starts descending.

LAREDO
(continuing)
One more thing, Phil. Do you know
why Wren called the church meeting
he never made?

DUMONT
No.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Laredo and June exit the secretaries' office beneath the C.E.O.'s penthouse. Laredo takes a piece of paper out of his pocket, crumples it up and tosses it into a receptacle.

JUNE
Wasn't that the note that old man
gave you for his son?

LAREDO
Yes. But he won't be reading it.
He was one of the five men they
just executed for Wren's death.

EXT./INT. MONORAIL - DAY

The train maneuvers away from the city's central hub. Laredo is holding onto a handstrap. June is sitting on an aisle seat.

The monorail stops at a landing and THREE BUSINESSMEN, well-dressed and bejewelled, get on. They spot Laredo and, smiling at each other, grab the handstraps nearest him.

BUSINESSMAN 1
I recognize the smell of a smograt.

His friends chuckle. Laredo's hand is a blur as he draws the shockgun and jams it into Businessman 1's nose. The man starts blubbering and his two friends jump away.

The other passengers scramble away, some of them screaming.

LAREDO
Recognize the smell of fear?

JUNE
Trooper, don't.

Businessman 1 groans and starts crying. His two friends cower at the far end of the train.

LAREDO
Yeah, that's it.

Just as quickly as he drew the weapon, he holsters it.

EXT. MONORAIL STOP (LEVEL ONE) - DAY

Laredo and June step out of the train and step aside for THREE WORKMEN who're boarding. As one, the Workmen stop and look at them.

WORKMAN 1
We're with you, Trooper.

LAREDO
What?

WORKMAN 2
The upper levels want you to fail.

LAREDO
This is just another case.

WORKMAN 3
Not any more.

They file into the train. The train pulls out of the platform.

June stops at the end of the platform, shocked by the panorama spread out before them: row after row of dilapidated buildings and filthy streets.

EXT. STREET - DAY

June is holding on tightly to Laredo as they walk down a sidewalk that's littered by PEOPLE. Most of them are Class C's, too sick to earn much of a living, or Class B's, their brains too burned out by drugs to function.

Some look up at them hopelessly; others know they're passing only by the SOUND of their steps and reach out blindly. Many others don't move at all.

EXT. ALLEY/MRS. PINSKY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rats scurry for cover as Laredo and June make their way through piles of trash toward a stairway climbing up the side of a building.

They climb the stairs and Laredo knocks on the door at the top of the small landing. MRS. PINSKY opens it. She's 80 years old, stands straight and speaks with a strong voice, but there's an unnatural glint in her eyes..

MRS. PINSKY

The angel of death, I presume?
Well, I'm not ready for you, yet.

She snickers but stops when she sees June standing behind Laredo.

JUNE

Hello, Mrs. Pinsky.

Mrs. Pinsky blinks in surprise.

MRS. PINSKY

June?

June steps past Laredo and hugs Mrs. Pinsky, who fights back tears.

INT. MRS. PINSKY'S APARTMENT - DAY

The room is small and the walls are covered with photos or paintings of America's former presidents. Stacks of books take up most of the floor space. June and Mrs. Pinsky are sitting on an overstuffed sofa, drinking lemonade. Laredo is standing, flipping through a book.

MRS. PINSKY

Debra Taylor. Terrible student
but a sweet girl, nonetheless.
She called me several months ago.
She seemed very sad.

LAREDO

Do you know where we can find her?

MRS. PINSKY

No. She didn't say. All I know
for sure is that Walter Wren sold
her to a board member.

Laredo snaps the book shut and sets it down.

MRS. PINSKY
(continuing)
It's my fault, you know.

Mrs. Pinsky starts trembling and covers her face with her hands.

JUNE
Are you alright, Mrs. Pinsky?

Mrs. Pinsky drops hands from her face and shakes her head.

MRS. PINSKY
No, I'm not alright. Haven't been
for 50 years.

She reaches under the sofa and pulls out an aged photo album. She flips through the pages which hold photos and newspaper clippings of her as a young woman.

She stops at a page with a yellowed clipping proclaiming: "Pinsky Wins Election"; under the headline is a photo of a young, pretty Mrs. Pinsky holding an American flag over her head.

MRS. PINSKY
I was a senator back in 2021 when
we passed the Twenty-Eighth
Amendment.

Laredo recoils.

LAREDO
You voted to outlaw the
Constitution?

MRS. PINSKY
Yes. But I did it for a very good
reason. Money.

Laredo stares at her in disbelief. June is confused at this revelation.

LAREDO
How much was it worth?

MRS. PINSKY
Twenty-five million dollars. That
was the going rate for a U.S.
Senator.

JUNE
Who paid you, Mrs. Pinsky?

MRS. PINSKY

The drug cartels and big business. They saw what they wanted and they bought it.

LAREDO

And the people just let you do it?

MRS. PINSKY

The people? You mean the electorate? The twenty-five percent who bothered to vote in 2020? Oh, yes, they wanted us to do it.

LAREDO

Why?

MRS. PINSKY

Taxes were outrageous, the economy was in hell, and crime was out of control. Mostly people didn't care anymore. They--we--didn't think things could get any worse.

Laredo snorts and looks around the room.

MRS. PINSKY

You won't find any mirrors in this place.

LAREDO

Didn't get much for your money.

MRS. PINSKY

I never spent it. I always hoped that someday I could use it to make up for the wrong I did.

(to June)

Do you hate me, June?

June shakes her head and hugs Mrs. Pinsky.

LAREDO

Why did you have to pass the Crime Control Act?

Mrs. Pinsky laughs derisively.

MRS. PINSKY

We had to keep our campaign promises, didn't we? We promised
(more)

MRS. PINSKY (Cont'd)
to abolish personal and business
taxes and control crime. And we
accomplished it all brilliantly
at one stroke. We legalized crime
and taxed it.

Disgusted, Laredo picks up his hat from an end table and starts
for the door.

EXT. STREET (LEVEL ONE) - DAY

Laredo and June are headed for the monorail stop at the end of the
street. PEDESTRIANS and vehicles are everywhere.

JUNE
How much longer?

Laredo checks his watch.

LAREDO
Twelve hours. It's been-

The SOUND of motorcycle engines makes him spin around: seven
motorcycle RIDERS simultaneously converge on the street from both
ends. The Riders are wearing night-vision goggles.

LAREDO
June!

He draws his weapon and flips down his face shield down as the
LIGHTS GO OUT with a DYING WHINE. An avalanche of NOISE
accompanies the sudden darkness: screams, obscenities, collisions,
motorcycle engines.

Concussion grenades explode in a stroboscopic glare around Laredo
and June, knocking them off their feet. He vainly tries to crawl
toward the screaming June, but another explosion flattens him.

The explosions cease as the Riders converge around them. Laredo's
shockgun flares into life and smashes one of the Riders off his
machine. Several shots answer Laredo's blast, but the Riders are
now driving away.

As the ROAR of the motorcycle engines diminishes, the LIGHTS
SPUTTER ON, revealing vehicle smashups up and down the streets and
numerous injured pedestrians, crying and moaning.

Laredo struggles to his feet in a daze. He looks around him
hopelessly. June is gone. He spots her phone on the ground,
smashed. He kicks it at the dead Rider sprawled in the middle of
the street.

He walks unsteadily to the body and removes the night-vision goggle. The facial features have been disfigured by a tattoo of a wolf's face.

Laredo pulls out his phone and Jaekkel's business card.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET (LEVEL FIVE) - JAKKEL'S HOME - DAY

A modest house on a quiet street. HEAR phone ringing.

INT. JAEKKEL'S HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Jaekkel enters the hallway, his TWO TODDLER DAUGHTERS clinging to his legs, laughing. He picks up the RINGING phone.

JAEKKEL

Hello?

LAREDO (V.O.)

This is Laredo. You said if I ever needed a favor...

Jaekkel looks down at his daughters and sighs.

JAEKKEL

Yes. Of course.

EXT. POWERPLANT (LEVEL ONE) - DAY

The sign above the building reads: "POWERPLANT 12." Laredo is met at the gate by a POWERPLANT GUARD who pokes him in chest.

GUARD

No visitors allowed, cowboy.

LAREDO

Stand aside, friend.

The Guard doesn't like the grim set of Laredo's face so he steps aside.

INT. POWERPLANT - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

The fat, sweating POWERPLANT MANAGER looks up in annoyance from a box of donuts as Laredo enters without knocking.

POWERPLANT MANAGER

Hey, now-

Laredo kicks the chair out from under him and he crashes to the floor.

LAREDO

I don't have time to play games,
so tell me what I need to know
fast.

Powerplant Manager gulps, nods.

LAREDO

(continuing)

This powerplant was responsible
for the blackout wasn't it?.

POWERPLANT MANAGER

Computer malfunc-

Laredo puts his boot to the other's throat and the fat man chokes.

LAREDO

Who told you to do it?

The man waves his arms desperately so Laredo removes the boot from his throat. It takes the fat man several attempts before he can get his voice working.

POWERPLANT MANAGER

My supervisor. I told him I
couldn't do it, but he said the
order came from his boss.

LAREDO

Who's the boss?

Powerplant Manager hesitates so Laredo takes a step forward.

POWERPLANT MANAGER

No! His name is Peter Wren. That's
all I know. Swear to God.

LAREDO

Wren. OK. Keep your mouth shut,
and I won't come back.

Powerplant Manager nods eagerly. Laredo scoops up a donut from the box and exits office.

POWERPLANT MANAGER

Hey, that's my favorite!

EXT. PETER WREN HOME (LEVEL SEVEN) - DAY

A cab pulls to a stop in front of a mansion and Laredo gets out.

LAREDO

Wait for me.

CABBIE nods.

Laredo crosses the expansive, artificial lawn, and knocks impatiently on the front door of the mansion. An old BUTLER opens the door and blinks at sight of Laredo.

BUTLER

Can I help you...Mr. Laredo?

LAREDO

Were you expecting me?

BUTLER

No sir, but you couldn't be anyone else.

LAREDO

Right. I'm looking for Peter Wren.

BUTLER

He left for an inspection tour of the new power plant in San Diego a couple hours ago.

LAREDO

Takes his duties as a board member of the Power Corporation seriously, does he?

BUTLER

Actually, this is the first time he's ever done anything like that. Quite sudden, too.

LAREDO

I see. Thank you.

Butler is surprised when Laredo shakes his hand.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS (LEVEL THREE) - DAY

Laredo climbs the steps and enters the imposing structure.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY - DAY

A bright, clean room. Laredo approaches the DESK SERGEANT.

LAREDO

Detective Vic Noda.

Desk Sergeant ignores him. Laredo grabs him by the collar.

LAREDO
(continuing)
Where's detective Noda?

Desk Sergeant points down one of the hallways.

DESK SERGEANT
Third door on the right, sir.

Laredo lets go of Desk Sergeant's collar.

LAREDO
Thank you.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Detective VIC NODA and Laredo are alone in room. Noda is 37, scar-faced. He's looking at a computer screen.

NODA
This is the first time you've
graced my office with your
presence. I must say I prefer
meeting you in out of the way
places.

LAREDO
Yeah, well, this is the first time
I've ever had a client kidnapped
from under my nose.

NODA
Here we are. Walter Wren was killed
with two shots fired from a
six-millimeter heat-seeker on the
night of August twentieth. The
accused were arrested, tried and
executed within 24 hours of the
crime as recommended by the Crime
Control Act.

He looks up from the monitor and grins.

LAREDO
Six millimeter heat-seekers. What
kind of anti-Republican can afford
that kind of a gun?

NODA
Don't ask me. The Death Squad
worked that case.

LAREDO

Figures. What about Tamara Knox?
The girl killed last night at Bruin
Park.

NODA

So you did have something to do
with the purloined cop car. You
should've seen the cops trying
to explain what happened to their
car.

Noda laughs.

NODA

(continuing)

Yeah, I caught that case. No one's
claimed the body yet. No one ever
claims dead sextoys.

LAREDO

Was an autopsy performed?

Noda turns to the computer terminal and punches some keys.

NODA

Yes. All Class A's are examined
in case they have to be
reclassified posthumously. It
wouldn't do to inter someone in
our precious dirt not deserving
of the honor.

He chuckles but stops when the computer screen responds with:
"Tamara Knox - Not in System."

NODA

(continuing)

"Not in system." What the hell...
Maybe the computer crashed.

He hits a button and the screen responds: "System OK" He keys in
the Knox file again and gets the same message: "Tamara Knox -
Not in System." A bead of sweat trickles down his forehead.

NODA

(continuing)

Nobody can erase a murder file.

Laredo runs a hand wearily through his hair.

LAREDO

Alright, maybe you can help me
find Tamara's best friend. A sextoy
named Debra Taylor.

Noda gives a start, hesitates, then opens a desk drawer and pulls out a plastic packet holding one long ticket.

NODA

Want to go to tonight's gladiator matches? Ringside?

LAREDO

What? No, thanks. I have to find June.

Noda holds out the ticket.

NODA

This ticket's special. I found it on Tamara Knox. It was charged to one Debra Taylor.

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Laredo exits the building, looks at his watch, then starts walking away. Around the corner comes a procession of three long, black cars. There are SIX DEATH SQUAD COPS in each car. Laredo recognizes Sgt. Hauser in the first car. The cops stare at him.

The cars stop in front of headquarters and the cops get out. All are big men with lifeless eyes, wear dark suits, and have a death's head skull tattooed on their right cheeks.

EXT. 8.9 RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Laredo pushes through the doors and enters.

INT. 8.9 RESTAURANT - BAR - NIGHT

The room is dark. Photo blowups of pre-earthquake Los Angeles adorn the walls. There are few CUSTOMERS this early in the evening. Laredo is at the bar, waiting impatiently. Jaekkel enters from the dining room and shakes hands with him. BARTENDER sets a soft drink on bartop, in front of Laredo.

JAEKKEL

Soda. Don't you ever give in to temptation?

LAREDO

I like doing things the hard way.

He takes a sip from his glass.

LAREDO

(continuing)

Why did you name this place the
"eight-nine"?

Jaekkel gestures at photos on the wall.

JAEKKEL

L.A. before the big quake--the
eight-niner. It's a reminder that
no man is master of his own fate.

LAREDO

It reminds me that people can be
arrogantly stupid. New L.A. is
just one big grave waiting to be
filled in.

JAEKKEL

So why don't you leave? You think
you're making a difference?

LAREDO

It doesn't much matter where you
are in the Republic. It's all the
same. Did you get to talk with
your K and E contacts?

JAEKKEL

Yes. The kidnapers don't belong
to the Kidnap and Extortion
Society. They're a renegade gang
from the Chicago Corporation. They
all sport the same wolf-face
tattoo. They've been operating
in L.A. for a couple of months.
They do odd jobs for people who
don't like to bother with the
paperwork--or taxes--required by
the Crime Control Act.

LAREDO

Is that it?

JAEKKEL

Well, rumor has it they hang out
at an abandoned hydroponics farm.
No location, though. Sorry.

LAREDO

No, you've helped more than anyone
else. It's a start.

JAEKKEL

If you don't mind my asking, why
all the interest in June Monroe?

LAREDO

Party A wants her dead because
he thinks Walter Wren told her
something. Party B kidnapped her
because he wants to find out what
that something is so he can hold
it over Party A. At least that's
the way I figure it. Thanks.

He shakes hands with Jaekkel.

EXT. THE ROMAN STADIUM - NIGHT

The entrance to the amphitheater is deserted. Marquee reads:
"WESTERN HEMISPHERE CHAMPIONSHIPS. KATE MCCARTHY VS. HELEN VIKOR."
A MUTED ROAR is coming from within the building.

INT. THE ROMAN STADIUM - MANAGER'S BOX - NIGHT

Manager is looking down at the fight in the arena with
binoculars--Kate and HELEN VIKOR. Laredo slides the glass partition
shut, cutting off most of the noise from below but he can't help
but occasionally glance down at the arena himself. Manager keeps
his binoculars trained on the fight as he talks.

MANAGER

Hey, I told you, Peter doesn't
ever come to the matches. All he
cares about is the profit, not
how he gets it.

LAREDO

I have to find him. Soon.

Manager hears the desperation in Laredo's voice and finally looks
at him.

MANAGER

Sorry. Peter goes to this club
three times a week. Tonight's one
of the nights.

LAREDO

Where's the club?

MANAGER

Level seven. Brentwood district.
It's called the Polo Club--they
horse around a lot up there.

He chuckles.

LAREDO

Thanks.

He turns to exit but Manager grabs his arm.

MANAGER

Relax, Trooper. The club doesn't open for an hour and a half. He'll be there. Guaranteed. Why don't you go down and enjoy the match?

Laredo looks at his watch, then down at the arena, and nods.

INT. THE ROMAN STADIUM - THE STANDS - NIGHT

The chant from the frenetic, standing room-only CROWD is deafening: "KATE - KATE - KATE!" Laredo fights his way toward the ringside seats.

THE ARENA

Kate and HELEN VIKOR, a statuesque woman in gold armor, are engaged in a sword duel. Sparks are flying as each fighter lands ferocious blows on the other.

THE STANDS

Laredo pushes his way down the ringside aisle, splitting his attention between the arena and the seat numbers painted on the floor. Jumping fans obscure numbers for the most part and he has to shove aside several to get his bearings.

THE ARENA

The gladiators lock swords, and their faces, only inches apart, show the strain of their effort. Helen's superior bulk finally begins to tell and one of Kate's legs begins to buckle. Crowd's chant instantly turns to a collective GROAN.

THE STANDS

Laredo reaches the number he wants: "A-291." He looks up and sees DEBRA TAYLOR. She's 17, a fragile beauty. Laredo takes the seat next to her and she gives him a perplexed look. She returns her attention to the fight.

THE ARENA

Kate's leg collapses under her, but, as she hits the ground, she scissors Helen's legs and rolls over, taking the bigger woman down. Crowd's despair instantly turns to joy and they start the chant: "KILL - KILL - KILL!"

Kate leaps to her feet and slashes down mightily with her sword and chatters Helen's flailing weapon in half. The other half of sword falls out of her senseless grasp. Kate drives sword point into Helen's throat and red sparks engulf her armored body. Kate holds her sword up triumphantly and the arena is inundated by delirious Fans who overwhelm the guards.

THE STANDS

Laredo smiles as Kate is lifted high in the air and paraded around the arena. Debra brushes past him. Reluctantly he follows her, but his eyes keep going back to the arena.

INT. V.I.P. ENTRANCE TUNNEL - NIGHT

This tunnel intersects the one leading from the arena to the gladiators' dressing rooms. Debra is running but Laredo quickly catches the frightened girl.

LAREDO

I'm not going to hurt you.

DEBRA

Let me go!

LAREDO

I'm here about Tamara Knox.

DEBRA

Tammy? Where is she?

LAREDO

She's dead.

Debra moans and tries to break free of his hold.

LAREDO

(continuing)

I didn't do it. I'm trying to find out who did. And I'm also trying to find June Monroe.

He lets go of her and she steps away, but doesn't run off.

DEBRA

June? And Tammy's dead?

Laredo nods. Debra slumps against the wall. Her eyes well up with tears.

At the intersecting tunnel, a dazed Helen Vikor is being escorted by TWO TRAINERS.

Debra wipes away her tears and straightens up.

LAREDO

When did you last see Tamara?

DEBRA

Last week. We went shopping. We did that a lot.

She almost starts crying again and leans on Laredo for support.

LAREDO

I'm sorry.

A subdued ROAR gets loader as the ENTOURAGE escorting Kate approaches.

Debra forgets her grief momentarily as she catches sight of Kate. Laredo also stares at the champion wearing the winged, jewel-encrusted helmet.

Kate sees him and breaks free of the crowd. Laredo sweeps her up and kisses her. Debra and the others stare in amazement.

Kate breaks off the kiss and laughs. Crowd surges around them and Kate is once more borne away.

KATE

The party's at the Imperial Hotel!

INT./EXT. LIMOUSINE/STREET - NIGHT

Debra is slumped in the seat next to Laredo. CHAUFFEUR ignores them, too busy piloting the car through the traffic going toward the city's center.

LAREDO

Whose sextoy was Tammy?

DEBRA

I don't know. We're not allowed to talk about things like that.

LAREDO

Was Tammy okay? Did she act differently?

DEBRA

How did you know?

LAREDO

What?

DEBRA

She wasn't feeling too good, so Mr. Wren took her to a hospital.

LAREDO

What was wrong with her?

DEBRA

I don't know. I was going to ask her tonight.

LAREDO

Why did Wren take her to the hospital, instead of her benefactor?

DEBRA

The less our "masters" know about us, the better. Besides, we could trust Mr. Wren.

LAREDO

Trust? All he did was sell you.

DEBRA

Well, that's the way it is, right?

LAREDO

What hospital did she go to?

DEBRA

Reagan Memorial. Level Four.

The car stops in front of a towering building.

LAREDO

Did Walter Wren ever phone you?

DEBRA

No. I'm not allowed any phone calls.

LAREDO

You don't have to go back, if you don't want to--I'll help you.

DEBRA

Thank you, but as bad as it can be sometimes, I'm still better off than most people, aren't I? Please find June.

She instinctively hugs him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Laredo gets out of the car and watches it weave its way back into the traffic.

EXT. AERIAL PARK - NIGHT

The small park is precariously attached to the Imperial Hotel. Laredo checks his watch. An aerial cab is parked at one end of the park.

The door to the hotel opens and Kate comes out, trailing MUSIC and LAUGHTER from the celebration.

They slowly approach each other, embrace, kiss long and hard.

KATE

I'm glad you came.

LAREDO

I shouldn't have.

KATE

Yes, I heard about June.

They walk to edge of the park.

LAREDO

I have to be somewhere in ten minutes. If I don't get the answers I want, I'm going to tear the city apart looking for June.

They stop at the railing and Kate rests her head on his arm.

KATE

You're the man who can do it.

(beat)

Why are things so messed up? Why can't we...

Her voice trails off and she shakes her head wistfully. Laredo runs his fingers lightly over her face, as if trying to memorize her beauty by touch.

LAREDO

What time does your plane leave?

KATE

Midnight. Non-stop to Tokyo.

LAREDO

June's contract expires at midnight. Three more hours. If she's still alive.

Kate takes his fingers and kisses them.

KATE

Does it all end for us, now?

LAREDO

We both have to do what we have
to do.

KATE

Silly me. No one lives happily
ever after, anymore

She kisses him softly.

KATE

(continuing)
Goodbye, Trooper Laredo.

She breaks free of his hold. Her eyes are shimmering.

KATE

(continuing)
I love you.

She walks away. Laredo wants to follow her but won't. When she
disappears into the hotel, he crosses to the cab.

EXT. POLO CLUB - NIGHT

The aerial cab parks on the street in front of a building that
looks like a tudor manor. Laredo gets out of the cab and takes
note of the limousines parked at the curb as he crosses the lawn.

A liveried DOORMAN bars the front door.

DOORMAN

Your business, sir?

LAREDO

Peter Wren.

DOORMAN

I'm sorry, but-

LAREDO

(interrupting)
Get him out here, or I'll go in
and drag him out.

Doorman reacts as if slapped. He picks up the phone and speaks
into it in a low voice.

The THROATY GROWL of an engine makes him look over his shoulder--a
sports car is cruising the street, it's two occupants kissing
and laughing.

Laredo turns back to the manor as the front door opens and Peter Wren appears on the threshold, a naked girl draped on one arm, and a half-naked boy on the other. Peter has a big grin on his face and his eyes are glazed.

DOORMAN

I'm sorry, Mr. Wren, but this man insisted on seeing you.

The shock on Peter's face when he sees his visitor doesn't register on Laredo because the SOUND of the sports car engine has SEGUED into the SOUND of motorcycle engines.

LAREDO

Damnit!

Laredo dives to the ground and spins around and sees that three helmeted RIDERS have stopped on the street. Their face masks are up, revealing their wolf-face tattoos. Wolf-face 1 is shouldering a rocket launcher, assisted by the other two riders.

Laredo can only manage to flip his face shield down before the rocket launcher spouts flames. The rocket flashes over him and goes through the open door, impacting directly on Peter. The EXPLOSION rips the building apart.

Fire and debris rain down on the neighborhood and the Wolf-faces barely escape their own destruction. The aerial cab manages to take off but a flying steel girder crashes into it, causing it to explode.

ALARMS and KLAXONS blare with ear-numbing intensity.

Laredo throws off a burning door, staggers to his feet and runs toward the street.

A THUNDERING VOICE from several public speakers starts issuing a series of pre-recorded warnings.

VOICE

The integrity of section nine, north sector, level seven, has been compromised. Evacuate immediately. Damage control measures have commenced.

A ball of flame lands on a car in Laredo's path and he has to leap it to escape the wall of fire rolling across the lawn.

VOICE

(continuing)

The integrity of section nine, north sector, level seven, has been compromised.

(more)

VOICE (Cont'd)
Evacuate immediately. Maximum
damage control measures have
commenced.

The Section of ceiling over the conflagration starts descending.
Water sprinklers in the ceiling and ground spurt into action.

Houses adjacent to blazing mansion burst into flame. Terrified
CITIZENS spill out into fiery chaos. Some of them jump into cars
only to be baked inside by sheets of dancing flame.

VOICE
(continuing)
Section nine, north sector, level
seven, is being sealed off. Extreme
danger. Evacuate immediately.

Dense black smoke makes it impossible to breathe and all but
impossible to see, but the face shield and breather built into the
hat give Laredo all the advantage he needs and he breaks into
a run.

Other people stagger about helplessly, while others scream as fire
consumes them.

The ceiling stops descending and sections of steel curtains start
dropping down to street level, boxing in the fire-engulfed area.

VOICE
(continuing)
This section is being quarantined
to protect your fellow citizens.
Evacuate immediately.

The descending steel walls smash through houses, cars and people.
The smoke and fire are now contained inside the huge box, along
with the few survivors.

Laredo, blinded by the smoke, hits the new wall and backs away,
perplexed.

VOICE
(continuing)
This section has been quarantined.
No exit is possible. The Republic
Corporation thanks you for having
made this a more profitable world
to live in. Good night.

The area around Laredo suddenly flares white as he fires a full
clip from his automatic grenade launcher at the wall. A ragged
section of the wall finally craters outward.

EXT. STREET ON OTHER SIDE OF WALL - NIGHT

FIREFIGHTERS, PARAMEDICS, POLICEMEN and frightened CITIZENS dive to the ground as shrapnel from the last grenade blows through the hole in the wall.

Smoke pours through the jagged breach and firefighters leap forward with steel panels and welding equipment. They freeze when Laredo steps through, tendrils of smoke wafting off him.

Behind him, a small dog leaps through the hole and scurries away.

The firefighters run to the hole and start patching it up.

Laredo flips up the face shield and inhales deeply. An overweight MOTORCYCLE POLICEMAN steps forward.

POLICEMAN

It's against the law to break
quarantine.

Laredo looks past him and sees the Wolf-faces in the background, astride their idling motorcycles, watching the scene incredulously.

Recognition dawns on them at the same time it does on Laredo. They shift into gear and spin away.

POLICEMAN

(continuing)
I'm going to arrest-

Laredo smashes a fist into Policeman's face and he drops like a lead weight. Laredo jumps on Policeman's motorcycle, powers it up and takes off, scattering people left and right.

EXT. STREETS (LEVEL SEVEN) - NIGHT

The Wolf-faces force other traffic to swerve around them as they roar down the street three abreast.

They skid into a turn, their legs brushing the street's surface. A PEDESTRIAN gets hit and is sent flying into a passing car.

Laredo takes the same turn, barely managing to maintain control as the motorcycle lurches onto the sidewalk, then back onto the street.

Wolf-faces snake in and out of heavy traffic. Behind them, Laredo is gaining ground rapidly.

Wolf-face 3 pulls out a pistol and opens fire on DRIVERS of on-coming cars. Several of them are hit and the crashing cars cause a pileup that blocks the street.

One of the cars jumps another and crashes nose down.

Laredo spins his machine to a stop, backs up, then turns around and accelerates--right up the nose-down car and over the pileup.

EXT. EVACUATION TUNNEL - NIGHT

Two Wolf-faces drive into the tunnel, while the third one swerves around and draws his pistol. Laredo bursts into view at the intersection down the street. Wolf-face 3 opens fire.

Laredo pulls the shotgun and blasts Wolf-face 3 off his machine. Without slowing down Laredo drives into the tunnel-

INT. EVACUATION TUNNEL - NIGHT

-and plummets down the steeply angled tube. The well-lit tunnel is wide enough to handle one large vehicle at a time. The circular cross-section allows the motorcycles to ride the walls and ceiling.

The spiraling nature of the tunnel allows Laredo only occasional glimpses of his quarry, and sometimes that view is from an upside-down perspective.

Down, down, the three men plunge, their passage measured by the white blurs that are the tunnel's entrance at each level. Maneuvering around these openings that appear without warning is the most dangerous part of the descent.

At the fifth opening, Wolf-face 2 miscalculates and shoots through the hole and splatters himself and his machine on the street beyond.

At the sixth, and last, opening, Wolf-face 1 flies out of the tunnel upside down, but lands right side up on the street and disappears from view. Laredo also flies out upside down-

EXT. DESERTED STREET (LEVEL ONE) - NIGHT

-and lands right side up. He stops a block down the street.

The Wolf-face is nowhere to be seen.

Laredo drives slowly down the deserted street. Dilapidated buildings house manufacturing concerns and warehouses.

Wolf-face 1 suddenly blasts out of an alley and aims his machine at Laredo. Laredo accelerates instantly.

Wolf-face 1 laughs hysterically as the motorcycles close in on each other. He stops laughing when Laredo doesn't veer off.

At the last second Wolf-face 1 tries to swerve, but Laredo kicks out and sends him careening into a truck parked at the curb.

The Truck doesn't give but Wolf-face 1 and his motorcycle do, and they rebound onto the street, a crumpled heap of machine and man.

Laredo circles the mess once then drives away, looking at the buildings on either side of the street.

He stops at an intersection, then turns down the side street.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

He passes a big building with only a partial sign over the entrance: "ONICS HOUSE #39". He looks at the building again and turns around.

Rest of the sign is on the ground, in front of the entrance. Laredo gets off the motorcycle and turns the sign over: "HYDROP".

His grin is hard-edged as he shuts off the motorcycle engine, and starts walking alongside the building. There are very few doors or windows in this structure.

Debris is piled along the base of the wall. Laredo walks around a pile of large cylinders marked: "PROPERTY OF AGRICULTURAL CORP."

He stops when he sees tire tracks leading away from behind the cylinders. He steps around the cylinders and sees an open passage leading to a door.

INT. HYDROPONICS HOUSE - NIGHT

In center of the huge room is a table, and on it is June, her arms and legs bound to the corners by rope. Her eyes are glazed, her mouth hangs open slackly. Her slicker is bundled under her head, serving as a pillow.

Around the table are the other three Wolf-faces. Wolf-face 4 is filling a hypodermic needle from a stoppered bottle.

The area around the table is given over to crude living quarters: cots, lamps, electric stove, refrigerator, cans of food, refuse. Three motorcycles are parked off to the side.

The rest of the room is dark and holds the remains of an abandoned hydroponics system: cylinders, lamps, tubing.

WOLF-FACE 5

I hope that stuff works better
than that truth juice you used
on her. It only knocked her out
for half a day.

He and Wolf-face 6 laugh.

WOLF-FACE 4

I'm no expert. The cheapster should've hired one of them police psyches. When they're done, them crims ain't got a thought left they can call their own. Besides, the Big A told me this was only a contingency plan. He was working on another way to get the info.

Wolf-face 4 holds needle up to light and squirts out solution and air bubbles.

WOLF-FACE 6

Well, that other plan must've worked, or you wouldn't be giving her that.

WOLF-FACE 4

Yeah, and I guarantee this stuff will redline her instantly.

He chuckles and puts the needle to June's arm, but before he can drive it under her skin, his back is demolished by a shockgun blast.

Wolf-faces 5 and 6 dive for cover, draw their guns and shoot blindly into the darkness. A cylinder rolls across the floor and they shoot at it.

Laredo leaps up and shoots Wolf-face 6 twice. Wolf-face 5 ducks behind the table and puts the gun to June's head.

WOLF-FACE 5

Deal-making time, smogger!

Laredo walks into the lighted area, shockgun held in front of him.

LAREDO

It's not smart to insult a man with a bigger gun.

Wolf-face's attempted laugh is more of a nervous giggle.

WOLF-FACE 5

You want the girl, I want to walk.

LAREDO

You can go--after you tell me who hired you.

WOLF-FACE 5

And go to the top of the redline
list? Your circuits are fried,
smogger. Stop, or I'll kill her!

His finger starts pulling back on the trigger, but Laredo's shot sears a path through the steel skirting of the table and into his midsection.

Wolf-face looks down at his bloodied stomach in disbelief then falls back to floor, pistol still locked in his fist.

Laredo holsters shotgun, takes a deep breath, and walks slowly toward table, afraid of what he'll find.

At the table, he gently turns June's face in his direction and smiles when he sees a spark of recognition in her eyes.

He cuts the rope bindings with a knife, then scoops up the girl and walks into the dark.

EXT. RONALD REAGAN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (LEVEL FOUR) - NIGHT

An ambulance pulls up to the emergency room bay. TWO AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS unload a gurney holding June and roll her inside the building. Laredo gets out of the ambulance and follows them.

INT. HOSPITAL - RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT

Laredo is staring at a large painting of a young Ronald Reagan in cavalry uniform astride a horse.

Laredo takes off his hat and compares it with the one Reagan is wearing. He flicks some ashes off his hat and puts it back on. A weary DOCTOR shuffles in from the emergency room.

DOCTOR

Where's the nurse?

LAREDO

Emergency. How's June?

DOCTOR

The girl's fine. Someone fed her
a weird drug cocktail. Mind telling
me why?

LAREDO

Is it worth your life?

Doctor studies Laredo carefully before shaking his head.

DOCTOR
What happened to you?

LAREDO
Kitchen fire. Can I see her?

DOCTOR
You can take her if you want.

He leads the way to the emergency room.

LAREDO
That's no way to maximize profits.

Doctor grunts.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM CUBICLE - NIGHT

June is sitting on edge of the bed, putting on the slicker.
Doctor holds the curtain aside and lets Laredo enter alone. June
jumps off the bed and throws herself into his arms.

JUNE
I knew you'd find me.

LAREDO
I'm your defender.

She hugs him tighter.

JUNE
What happened? It got dark, then
something hit me. And why does
my arm hurt?

She massages her arm where she was injected.

LAREDO
You were kidnapped then injected
with a truth drug that knocked
you out. How do you feel?

JUNE
I have a headache. And my wrists
and ankles are sore. And my stomach
doesn't feel too good, either.
Or maybe I'm just hungry.

Laredo laughs at the return of her old spirit.

JUNE
Hey, how long was I out? I don't
suppose my murder contract has
expired?

LAREDO
One more hour to go.

She shivers, sits down on the bed.

The NURSE, a woman of 60, enters the cubicle, a folder in hand.

NURSE
I found it, Mr. Laredo.

She hands him folder tabbed "TAMARA KNOX." He opens folder and frowns at the forms.

LAREDO
I'm sorry, but what does it mean?

NURSE
Tamara Knox had Dryden's Plague.

LAREDO
But she was Class A.

NURSE
She contracted it only a few weeks ago. Technically, Miss Knox was no longer a Class A. Since we don't handle Class C's, she was referred to a level two hospital. Sorry, but those are the rules.

LAREDO
Thank you.

Nurse nods and turns to exit but Laredo's voice stops her.

LAREDO
(continuing)
Why did you help me? You could lose your citizenship over this.

Nurse shrugs.

NURSE
'Cause I'm one of you.

She exits. Laredo and June look at each other, mystified.

EXT. CHURCH OF PURE BLOOD - NIGHT

Laredo and June warily approach the Church of Pure Blood.

JUNE
How do you know it's him?

LAREDO

Know anyone else with a redline list?

They climb the steps and Laredo tries the doors. They're locked.

JUNE

What did he want me for?

LAREDO

To find out what Walter Wren told you with his last dying breath.

They cross the steps to side of the church and start down the path leading to back of the building.

JUNE

That's the same stupid reason that other guy is trying to kill me. What do they think I know?

LAREDO

That Tamara Knox was no longer a Class A.

EXT. REAR OF CHURCH - NIGHT

Laredo brings out the tube of grease and is about to spread it on a palm, when June holds her hand out. He notes the determined look on her face, so he spreads the grease on her palm.

JUNE

Why did he decide to kill me, then?

LAREDO

Probably because he found out what he needed to know from one of his church members who also happens to be a cop.

She puts her palm on the door's scanning plate and it opens.

INT. CHURCH - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Laredo and June stop a few feet from the open door leading to Reverend's office. Light is on in the office. Laredo draws his shockgun. He gestures June to stay back and vaults into the office.

INT. REVEREND'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Laredo hits the floor rolling and leaps to his feet, gun held out. He lowers shotgun when he sees the Reverend sprawled on the desk, the back of his head covered with blood, one of his hands still holding a phone.

On computer monitor is Reverend's photo and i.d.: "TOM BARON, CLASS A, #A8891-039-7020."

June steps into the office and gasps, but doesn't look away from the body. Laredo puts two fingers to Reverend's neck, shakes his head.

LAREDO

He'll be missed.

He takes the phone out of Reverend's hand and hits the redial button. Phone RINGS on other end and it's immediately picked up.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hello?

LAREDO

(whispering)

I can't talk.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Reverend? What's wrong? Why were we cut off?

LAREDO

(whispering)

We have to meet.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yes, of course. The Gold Club in 20 minutes?

LAREDO

(whispering)

Good.

He hangs up the phone.

JUNE

Who killed him?

LAREDO

The same man who killed Wren.

JUNE

Because the Reverend found out what Wally knew?

LAREDO

Uh-huh. You could become a dangerous woman with that brain of yours.

JUNE

Thanks. Do you like smart women better than old gladiators?

Laredo dials a number on the phone.

JUNE

(continuing)

Well?

Laredo smiles and this causes June to fume.

LAREDO

Hello. Detective Noda?

INTERCUT WITH

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

POLICEMEN, uniformed and plainclothes, are gathered on steps around a dead detective. Noda is standing over the bloody body, his personal phone in hand.

NODA

Trooper? Look, this is a bad time to talk.

LAREDO

Why? One of your fellow cops dead?

Noda moves away from the other cops so they won't overhear him.

NODA

How did you know?

LAREDO

It had to be a cop who passed on Tamara Knox's file to the Reverend Tom Baron. And he's dead, too.

NODA

Jesus. What the hell is going on, Trooper?

LAREDO

All I can tell you is don't trust anyone.

Noda's free hand starts inching for his holstered weapon.

NODA
I already don't.

He breaks the connection and starts backing away from the other cops.

END INTERCUT

EXT. GOLD CLUB (LEVEL SIX) - NIGHT

The small bar's doors are gold-plated. A cab stops in front of bar and a woman gets out and enters the bar.

INT. GOLD CLUB - NIGHT

The fixtures are gold trimmed as is the clientele. Miss Davidson enters and looks around the room furtively. Laredo and June step out of the shadows, startling her.

JUNE
Hello, Miss Davidson.

She looks at them uncomprehendingly.

LAREDO
The Reverend is dead.

Miss Davidson wavers on her feet so Laredo takes her arm and escorts her to their table.

LAREDO
(continuing)
Shot in the head. A six-millimeter
heat-seeker, I'd say. Same type
gun used on Walter Wren.

As soon as they sit down, a WAITER brings a drink over and sets it down in front of Miss Davidson. She smiles weakly at the waiter, who moves on to another table.

LAREDO
(continuing)
You and the Reverend were close?

MISS DAVIDSON
He was a great man. A man of
vision.

LAREDO
Yeah. I saw his vision on level
one this morning. It was red all
over.

MISS DAVIDSON
Purification is necessarily a messy business.

LAREDO
So's mine. I need some answers.

MISS DAVIDSON
Why should I talk to you?

LAREDO
Because if you don't, I'll kill you.

Miss Davidson stiffens up and downs most of her drink at one gulp. June smiles.

LAREDO
(continuing)
The Reverend found out why Walter Wren was killed, didn't he?

Miss Davidson nods convulsively.

MISS DAVIDSON
One of the Pure Bloods on the police force gave him an autopsy report. That's all I know.

LAREDO
The Reverend had his wolf-pack kill Peter Wren. Why?

MISS DAVIDSON
He couldn't be trusted. He would've used the information the Reverend discovered for his own selfish ends. He'd have hurt us, sooner or later.

LAREDO
He would've hurt you? Your friends happened to kill a couple hundred L-sevens along with Peter Wren.

Miss Davidson chokes on the last of her drink.

LAREDO
(continuing)
Did you see Walter Wren the day he was killed?

MISS DAVIDSON
Yes. I need another drink.

LAREDO

Did he tell you why he called that church meeting?

MISS DAVIDSON

No. I need a drink.

Miss Davidson starts to get up from the table but Laredo grabs her arm and forces her back down.

LAREDO

What did he talk about?

MISS DAVIDSON

The usual nonsense. How his fighters were going to sweep the nationals. How his brother was a greedy idiot. How he was going to get his own city-

LAREDO

His own city?

MISS DAVIDSON

Buenos Aires, he said. But he was always talking about getting his own city.

Laredo stretches the fingers of his shooting hand.

LAREDO

June Monroe, this is the worst case I've ever been on, and it keeps getting worse.

June turns to Miss Davidson.

JUNE

Was it the Reverend's idea to have the wolves redline me? Or yours?

Miss Davidson looks away. June picks up a knife from the table and holds it up to the light so it reflects in the other woman's eyes.

MISS DAVIDSON

You...you're...nothing...

JUNE

Bitch.

June slaps her hard.

EXT. REAR OF GOLD CLUB - NIGHT

Laredo comes out by the kitchen door, surveys the alley, then nods at June, who steps out. They speak in low whispers.

JUNE

You sure they're out there?

LAREDO

There's only five minutes left.
They have to make their move.

JUNE

Then let's just wait out the five minutes.

Laredo shakes his head.

JUNE

(continuing)

OK, then give me your watch. I'm not giving those troglodytes one extra second to kill me.

Laredo hands her his watch, then rounds the corner of the building and sees EXPEDITER 1, his back to him, peering around the front of the building. Laredo sneaks up behind him, clamps a hand on his mouth and jerks him back, gives the head a twist until it snaps, then drops the lifeless body.

He looks back at June and she holds up four fingers.

Laredo looks around the front of the building and spots THREE EXPEDITERS across the street. One of them is hiding in the shadows of a doorway, and the other two are hiding behind cars. Their guns are trained on front entrance of the club.

June comes up behind him and picks up Expediter 1's hand cannon. Laredo silently points out the three targets, then before she can nod, he flips down his face shield and opens fire on the Expediters: three rapid-fire shots and three Expediters fall dead.

JUNE

Three minutes to go!

From inside four cars parked along the street pop up FOUR more EXPEDITERS, and now they have a target. Laredo pushes June back into the alley, then dives and rolls to the sidewalk to draw their fire. When he jumps up he shoots the nearest expediter.

The other Expediters scramble to get out of their cars, but not before Laredo leaps on top of a car and gets a clear view of two of them and kills them. The blast from the last Expediter's hand cannon forces him to drop into the middle of the street, where he's an easy target.

Behind him, June frantically works the buttons on the hand cannon until it fires. The recoil knocks her down and the round blows up a parked car near the last Expediter, who sends a blast at June, but his aim is spoiled by the shockgun blast that tears the legs out from under him.

LAREDO

Stay back!

June runs to Laredo as he reloads his shockgun, ignoring his advice.

JUNE

Two minutes!

Two cars suddenly appear at either end of the street and come barreling toward them. There are TWO EXPEDITERS in each car, and they're all firing their weapons.

As Laredo and June try to reach the safety of an alley, he holsters the shockgun and pulls out the grenade launcher, ignoring the the macadam that's geysering around them.

When June reaches the alley safely, he spins around and unloads a burst at each of the cars, causing each to explode and crash into the other. Laredo and June collapse to their knees, exhausted.

JUNE

Forty-five seconds...

The street in front of them explodes.

The dust and smoke obscures Laredo's view of the EXPEDITER with the mini-missile launcher, who stepped out of the building across the street. Expediter grins as he fires missiles into the buildings bordering the alley, causing Laredo and June to run out into the street.

Before Laredo can spot the enemy, the Expediter already has him and June in his sights, but before he can fire another missile salvo, a dagger comes WHISTLING out of the smoke and debris and impales itself in his throat. The mini-missile launcher clatters to the street and he does the same a second later.

Laredo stares uncomprehendingly at the body.

JUNE

Five seconds...four...three...two
...one!

She kisse Laredo gleefully, who doesn't seem all that relieved.

He turns his weapon in the direction of approaching FOOTSTEPS.

From out of the roiling smoke and flame strolls Kate.

KATE

Hope I wasn't interrupting.

Laredo smiles and shakes his head. June just stares at her.

KATE

(continuing)

Good thing we exchanged locator chips.

She shows him her hand phone.

LAREDO

Your plane.

KATE

(continuing)

It took off without me.

Laredo takes Kate in his arms and kisses her.

JUNE

Thanks for saving my life, Trooper.
I don't suppose you want my favors
in payment for your services?

Laredo and Kate don't even hear her. The sight of them prolonging their kiss brings a grimace to June's face.

JUNE

(continuing)

Your loss, citizen. There are
plenty of men in this world who
would die for one of my kisses.

This causes Laredo and Kate to laugh.

KATE

Is it really over?

JUNE

Of course it's over. Tell her
Trooper.

(beat)

Trooper?

LAREDO

Even though you were kidnapped
illegally, all that time you were
out of circulation constitutes
breach of contract. The contractor
can ask the police to send the
Death Squad after you.

June stares at him in disbelief.

Kate walks over to June and hugs her comfortingly.

LAREDO

(continuing)

You two find cover for awhile.
I won't be long.

He starts walking away.

KATE

What are you going to do!

LAREDO

I'm going to put an end to this.

The women watch him for a few seconds, then glance at each other, then pick up hand cannons from the street, and follow Laredo.

He stops, turns, sees the look in their faces, and nods. They walk down the street three abreast.

EXT. L.A. CORPORATION TOWER - NIGHT

A monorail stops at the lowest landing and the three of them get out. The building is dark except for the topmost floor.

As they enter the building, Laredo catches a glimpse of a black car hood protruding from a side street.

INT. L.A. CORPORATION TOWER - LOBBY - NIGHT

The three walk to the elevator bank, their footsteps echoing on the tile floor.

KATE

Do they usually leave this building
unlocked?

LAREDO

Only on special occasions.

(beat)

Remember what I said about special
occasions?

They stop at the elevator bank, and as one, the women understand. They both produce the goggles Laredo gave them and slip them over their foreheads.

INT. L.A. CORPORATION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open and the three of them step out and cross to a door down the hall. It's unlocked.

INT. LOWER OFFICE - NIGHT

Many desks with computer terminals. Interspersed among the desks are circular platforms set flush with the floor. They step onto the nearest platform and it starts rising automatically, silently.

INT. PENTHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Philip Dumont looks up from his computer as the platform elevates the visitors into the room. He smiles.

DUMONT

Mike! Good to see you again. And
your friends are welcome, as well.
What can I do for you?

Kate and June flank Laredo as they step off the platform.

LAREDO

As a Class C, you're in no position
to do anything for anybody.

DUMONT

Pardon?

LAREDO

Tamara Knox was your sextoy. You
infected her with Dryden's Plague.
Walter Wren found out and tried
to blackmail you. So you killed
him.

DUMONT

What? I'll have your license for
this impertinence!

LAREDO

Class C's can't be board members,
much less C.E.O.'s, so you can't
have anything.

Dumont laughs nervously as he watches Kate and June position themselves on either side of his desk, and doesn't see Laredo reach inside his slicker.

DUMONT

Really, Mike, this has gone far
enough. A joke's a joke, but-

LAREDO

You bought the contract on June
because you were afraid Walter
Wren had told her about you.

JUNE

But he didn't tell me anything.

LAREDO

Then the Reverend found out you
were no longer a Class A and you
had to kill him, too.

Dumont grunts angrily, jumps to his feet and sweeps paperwork to the floor--all to distract them from the six elevator platforms rising stealthily into view behind them. There are three Death Squad Cops on each platform, including Sgt. Hauser, and all have their weapons drawn.

Laredo slaps his visor shut and the women slip their goggles into place.

DUMONT

You can't talk to me like that!

Laredo flips the actinic grenade backward and the blinding explosion catches the cops only half-way into the room.

Laredo whips out his grenade launcher, the women pull their hand cannons, and the three of them spin around and open fire on the panicked cops, who shoot wildly.

The cops who aren't killed instantly by the first barrage, scramble onto the floor, hoping to find some cover even as they continue shooting wildly.

Some of the platforms collapse, taking the cops with them, while others continue up with their dead cargo.

Laredo ejects a spent clip and reloads effortlessly, taking out cop after cop. Kate has better luck handling her weapon than June, but they both stand their ground, even as shrapnel, bullets and debris pepper the room.

Cops, furniture and windows are blown apart.

Behind the desk, Dumont cowers, eyes shut tightly. Fire breaks out, smoke starts obscuring the room, ALARMS start screaming. The overhead sprinkler system kicks in.

Laredo ejects another spent grenade clip and reloads in one motion and destroys an entire wall along with a cop.

Kate can't see the Cop shooting at her, so she fires a round into the floor in his direction and that section of floor collapses, taking him with it.

A flaming ceiling beam crashes down near June, and she rolls away from it--and crashes into Sgt. Hauser, who's crawling on all fours. Hauser tries to grab her, but June smashes her gun into his face and scrabbles away. Hauser brings his gun up so she shoots him.

Dumont pulls a six-millimeter heat seeker from a desk drawer, crawls out from under his desk and makes a dash through the smoke and fire toward an elevator platform.

Kate materializes in front of him and she pulls the hand cannon trigger but nothing happens. Dumont aims at her but June fires first and his face disappears.

Laredo empties his weapon into the fire and smoke, destroying the globe of the world, before realizing all the cops are dead.

LAREDO

June! Kate!

They hear rather than see him in the maelstrom, and make their way toward him. He shepherds them to one end of the room as the ceiling starts collapsing behind them.

They stop at the now-windowless precipice, and before Kate and June know what he's up to, he grabs each one by the waist and leaps.

EXT. L.A. CORPORATION TOWER - NIGHT

The three plummet as one, SCREAM as one, the side of the building only feet from their spinning bodies.

Down...down...down...until finally they crash into the gigantic, inflated safety bag that automatically unfurled on all sides of the building at the first sign of fire.

They lie on the bag, stunned but unharmed. The SOUND of numerous SIRENS approaching stirs Laredo.

LAREDO

Everyone OK?

KATE

I'll never be able to have children.

JUNE

Well, at least, you had a man.

This strikes Laredo and Kate as uproariously funny. They roll off the bag, laughing, then Laredo helps June get off.

They look up at the tower: the upper floors are in flames. "Rain" falls on them from the main ceiling sprinkler 2000-feet above.

Jaekkel steps up behind them and Laredo instantly spins around, his hand reaching for the shockgun--but stops, confused, when he sees who it is.

Laredo gestures for Kate and June to step away from him and they do so.

Jaekkel shrugs appologetically.

JAEKKEL

Sorry, Trooper. Secret contract.

Jaekkel is lightning fast as he goes for his gun, but Laredo is quicker and his blast knocks the other man off his feet.

Laredo looks inexpressibly weary as he walks up to the dead man and stares down at him.

June and Kate join him.

The SIRENS get louder.

LAREDO

Get out of here!

KATE

Without you?

LAREDO

This is something I can't run away from.

JUNE

No!

LAREDO

Go! Now!

The anger in his voice convinces them and they start running.

Police cars swerve into the street from the other direction.

EXT. CITY COURTS BUILDING (LEVEL THREE) - NEXT DAY

POLICE and CITY MARSHALS surround the building, keeping at bay a huge, sullen CROWD composed mostly of Class B's and C's and gladiators in military-like uniforms.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

The courtroom is big; large windows high overhead let in abundant "sunlight." A gallery for spectators circles the room.

At one end of the room, on an elevated dais, sits the JUDGE, a bespectacled man of 60 in black robes.

On the wall behind Judge is the flag of the Republic: a red dove on a field of white; the dove's beak is holding a gold streamer with these words on it: "CAVEAT EMPTOR."

Beneath dais is the prosecutor's bench. The PROSECUTOR, a sallow-faced man in his thirties, is boredly drumming his fingers on the table.

At opposite end of the room is the defendant's dock, and beneath that the defense attorney's bench. On one side of room is the witness' stand, and on the opposite side is the court clerk's table.

On the main floor is an elliptical table, around which sit TWELVE BOARD MEMBERS of various corporations. In front of each is a computer terminal.

Laredo is sitting in the defendant's dock. Flanking him are TWO CITY MARSHALS. At the attorney's bench sits an ANCIENT LAWYER.

JUDGE

Has the distinguished jury of
corporate board members reached
a verdict?

PEOPLE in the gallery lean forward, expectantly. Most are from the lower levels.

The Jurors punch a key on their terminals.

Judge glances at his own terminal.

JUDGE

(continuing)

The jury has indicated they have
reached a decision. Please input
your verdict.

The Jurors punch another key.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Thank you. The defendant will stand
for the reading of the verdict.

Laredo remains sitting. The Marshals on either side of him glance at each other nervously but do nothing.

Judge clears his throat to cover this lapse of decorum.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Michael Torres Laredo, you have been found guilty of the unlawful murder of Philip Arthur Dumont and eighteen Los Angeles Corporation police officers whose names have been read into the record.

An angry stir runs through the gallery.

The Jurors look about them apprehensively.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Mr. Laredo, as a Class A citizen, you have been advised of the availability of a full pardon for your crimes from the Chief Executive Officer of The Republic Corporation. The cost of your crimes against society has been assessed at eighteen million, three-hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars. You have already stated your intention not to purchase such a pardon. You have also been advised of The Republic's generous offer of a full pardon in return for your services to the Defense Corporation for a period of ten years. You have also refused that option. Before passing sentence, I must ask you once more if you wish to reconsider either alternative.

All eyes turn to Laredo.

He smiles coldly and shakes his head.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Very well. Michael Torres Laredo, I hereby-

COURT CLERK

Uh, your honor.

Confusion reigns as everyone turns to the elderly CLERK, who's holding a computer printout in his hands.

JUDGE

Yes, what is it?

COURT CLERK

Sorry to interrupt, your honor,
but the court has been notified
that Mr. Laredo's pardon has been
purchased.

An electric charge of excitement runs through the gallery. Laredo frowns. Judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Will the court clerk please read
the name of the benefactor as
required by law?

COURT CLERK

Your honor, the benefactor is Mrs.
Myra Nelson Pinsky.

Laredo, startled, searches the gallery and sees Mrs. Pinsky, flanked by June and Kate. Mrs. Pinsky smiles. June laughs and waves. Kate just nods her head.

The spectators let out a cheer and Judge angrily bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Order! Order!

The crowd quiets down as CITY MARSHALS, brandishing nightsticks, suddenly appear among them.

JUDGE

(continuing)

Mr. Laredo, your full rights as
a citizen have been restored,
thanks to the Republic's
magnanimous rules of justice. Do
you have anything to say to this
court before you are released?

Laredo considers the question for a moment then stands up.

LAREDO

You don't know shit from Shinola.

The spectators let out a roar of approval. Judge bangs his gavel angrily and the Marshals start using their sticks.

EXT. CITY COURTS BUILDING - DAY

Laredo steps out of the building to wild cheers from the crowd. He seems surprised at his reception.

June comes running out of another door, followed at a more sedate pace by Kate and Mrs. Pinsky. June flings herself at Laredo, almost knocking him off balance.

The court spectators rush out of the building and the cops and marshals give up trying to maintain any kind of order, except around Laredo.

Laredo deposits June on her feet and gives Kate a long kiss.

KATE

You know what the people want,
don't you?

LAREDO

I know.

KATE

Do you know how to go about
starting a revolution?

Laredo thinks about it for a second, then shakes his head.

LAREDO

No. But I'll read a book.

Kate nods, satisfied, and kisses him.

FADE OUT.

THE END